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**WHAT IS THE STATE OF ISLAMIC
EXTREMISM: KEY TRENDS, CHALLENGES,
AND IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY**

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, Friday, February 13, 2015.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 9:02 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. William M. “Mac” Thornberry (chairman of the committee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. WILLIAM M. “MAC” THORNBERRY, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM TEXAS, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order.

On Wednesday, the President submitted to Congress his proposal for an authorization to use military force against ISIS [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria]. Although the President has ordered combat operations against ISIS take place in Iraq since last August and in Syria since last September, only now has he sought the congressional authorization required by the Constitution.

Despite the airstrikes, press accounts indicate that ISIS has expanded its territory that it controls in Syria. The world has been horrified at its barbarism, which seems to have no limit.

In the meantime, the United States has suffered a significant setback in Yemen. We have abandoned our embassy there, a place which the President once held out as a model for his counterterrorism approach. Now we are in a much weaker position to prevent attacks by the organization that has posed the most serious threat to our homeland in recent years.

Elsewhere, Boko Haram is killing thousands and steadily advancing in Nigeria; Libya has become a breeding ground for terrorist groups; AQIM [Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb] still menaces the population in several North African countries; and there is concern that Al Qaeda in the Afghan-Pakistan region is becoming reinvigorated as U.S. troop levels are reduced.

Congress will consider the President’s AUMF [authorization for use of military force] proposal in the context of this wider fight against Islamist terrorists. The purpose of today’s hearing is to evaluate how that broader struggle is going. Among the questions I have are: What are the trends we see with Islamist terrorists? Is their appeal growing or diminishing around the world? Is the threat to the United States becoming more or less serious?

Many in Congress want reassurances that the President has a strategy to succeed against this threat and that he is personally committed to persevere until we are successful. It is clear that be-

fore we are successful we have to understand the threat, where we are, and where we are headed. That is the purpose of today's hearing.

Mr. Smith.

STATEMENT OF HON. ADAM SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM WASHINGTON, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

I thank the chairman for this hearing on this very important topic. I think it is the largest national security threat that we face as a country. And I know all three of our panelists have a lot of knowledge on the issue, and I think it will be very helpful for the committee to hear from them and engage in questions and answers as we try to figure out how to confront this threat.

And part of the problem with the threat is it is not easy to define and is not to easy to put a strategy around, because it really is a broad ideology that has many, many different components.

You know, post-9/11, we saw Al Qaeda as a terrorist group with a centralized leadership that was plotting and planning attacks against us and, I think, responded accordingly to try and defeat that organization, to try and defeat that network, and did a reasonably effective job of it in Afghanistan and in Pakistan as we prevented that group from being able to mount further attacks against us. That is the positive.

The negative is that the ideology itself has metastasized. It has grown into a number of the groups that the chairman mentioned and even more than that, in a lot of different places.

And the root cause is a lack of solid governance, a lack of solid economic opportunity in the Middle East and North Africa and much of the Arab Muslim world. They have an exploding youth population that has nothing to do; no jobs and no prospects. So the ideology that comes along and says, "I have the answer for you," has plenty of willing recruits. And, meanwhile, they don't have much in the way of an example of a good government anywhere that they could look to and work with.

So it is going to be very difficult to contain. I think the chairman laid out, you know, the challenges with ISIS in Iraq and Syria, the collapse in Yemen, the difficulties in Libya. But, overall, I think we need a long-term strategy.

One of the things that I think has hampered us is this notion that we have to be able to confidently say either, A, that we are winning or that we are going to win and here is how. I honestly think that this is a long-term ideological struggle, not something that we can say, you know, we are determined to defeat it so let's just suck it up and 3 or 4 years from now it will be done. It took 75 years to defeat communism. I think we have to figure out how to have a long-term strategy for dealing with this ideology.

Now, that doesn't mean that in the short term the ideology runs rampant. A huge piece of that strategy is containing the threat, figuring out how to protect our interests from violence, and figuring out how to begin to roll back these groups and roll back the advance of their ideology.

But it is an issue that defies an easy answer. So what we hope to hear today is some ideas on how we can proceed and move forward, mindful of the fact that it is a very, very large problem that is going to take a long time to deal with.

And the final point that I will make: One of the things that hamstring us is it is not something the U.S. or the Western world can take care of. The Muslim world does not want the United States to show up and tell it what it ought to do. And this is true even of the moderate Muslims that we look to work with.

We have to figure out how we can be helpful to support those moderate voices so that they can triumph, so that they can defeat these extremist ideologies. It cannot be Western-driven, by the very definition of the way those folks look at the world. So we can help, but if we help too much, in an odd sort of way we wind up hurting the overall effort. I think that is the lesson we learned in Iraq and Afghanistan.

So, with that, I look forward to the testimony, the questions. And I appreciate the chairman holding the committee; or the hearing, I should say.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

I would just mention to Members that I think we are supposed to have votes on the floor roughly around 10:40, 10:45. And so I am going to try to be fairly strict with, be strict with the time limits so we can move along smartly.

I ask unanimous consent that the full written statement of all of our witnesses be made part of the record.

Without objection, so ordered.

Let me again thank our witnesses for being here.

I am very pleased to see retired Lieutenant General Michael Flynn, former Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency; Mr. William Braniff, executive director, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, with the University of Maryland; and Dr. Marc Lynch with The George Washington University.

All of these gentlemen have done very serious, helpful work for the committee and for the country on this topic of terrorism.

And we are very grateful to have you with us today. As I said, your full written statement will be made part of the record. If you would like to summarize at this point and then we will get to questions, we would appreciate it.

General Flynn.

**STATEMENT OF LTG MICHAEL FLYNN, USA (RET.), FORMER
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY**

General FLYNN. Great. Thank you.

Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, members of the committee, it is an honor to be here today, and I really appreciate the invitation.

You have asked me to comment on the state of Islamic extremism. Today I have the unhappy task of informing you that, according to every metric of significance, Islamic extremism has grown over the last year.

Whether it be the scale and scope of ISIS and its associated movements, the number of violent Islamist groups, the territory

which these groups control, the number of terrorist attacks these groups perpetrate, the massive numbers and suffering of refugees and displaced persons due to these Islamist groups, that is approximately 15 million people, the amount of kidnapping and rape of women and children by these groups, the numbers of casualties they inflict, their broad expansion and use of the Internet, which is very serious, or just their sheer barbarism that we have witnessed, I can draw no other conclusion than to say that the threat of Islamic extremism has reached an unacceptable level and that it is growing.

We are at war with violent and extreme Islamists, both Sunni and Shia, and we must accept and face this reality.

This enemy has an engrained and unshakeable vision of how the world and society should be ordered, and they believe violence is a legitimate means of bringing about this ideal state. The violent Islamist is serious, devout, committed, and dangerous. His ideology justifies the most heinous, inhumane actions imaginable, and he will not be reasoned with, nor will he relent. This enemy must be opposed, they must be killed, they must be destroyed, and the associated extremist form of the Islamic ideology must be defeated wherever it rears its ugly head.

There are some who counsel patience, arguing violent Islamists are not an existential threat and therefore can simply be managed as criminals. I respectfully and strongly disagree.

I have been in the theaters of war of Iraq and Afghanistan for many years, faced this enemy up close and personal, and I have seen firsthand the unrestrained cruelty of this enemy. They may be animated by a medieval ideology, but they are thoroughly modern in their capacity to kill and maim, as well as precisely and very smartly message their ideas, intentions, and actions via the Internet. In fact, they are increasingly capable of threatening our Nation's interests and those of our allies.

Furthermore, it would be foolish for us to wait until our enemies pose an existential threat before taking decisive action. Doing so would only increase the cost in blood and treasure later for what we know must be done now. Our violent and extremely radical Islamist enemies must be stopped.

To that end, I offer the following three strategic objectives:

First, we have to energize every element of national power, similar to the effort during World War II or during the cold war, to effectively resource what will likely be a multigenerational struggle. There is no cheap way to win this fight.

Second, we must engage the violent Islamists wherever they are, drive them from their safe havens, and kill them. There can be no quarter and no accommodation for this vicious group of terrorists. Any nation-state that offers safe haven to our enemies must be given one choice: to eliminate them or be prepared for those contributing partners involved in this endeavor to do so.

We do need to recognize there are nations who lack the capability to defeat this threat and will likely require help to do so inside of their own internationally recognized boundaries. We must be prepared to assist those nations.

Third, we must decisively confront the state and non-state supporters and enablers of the violent Islamist ideology and compel

them to end their support to our enemies or be prepared to remove their capacity to do so.

Many of these are currently considered partners of the United States. This must change. If our so-called partners do not act in accordance with internationally accepted norms and behaviors or international law, the United States must be prepared to cut off or severely curtail economic, military, and diplomatic ties. We cannot be seen as being hypocritical to those we are partnering with to defeat radical Islam.

Finally, in pursuit of these objectives, I fully support Congress' constitutional role in providing an authorization for the use of military force. This authorization should be broad and agile but unconstrained by unnecessary restrictions, restrictions that today cause not only frustration in our military, our intelligence, and our diplomatic communities, but also significantly slow down the decision-making process for numerous fleeting opportunities.

It is important, however, to realize that such an authorization is neither a comprehensive strategy nor a war-winning one. If there is not a clear, coherent, and comprehensive strategy forthcoming from the administration, there should be no authorization.

With that, Chairman, I am happy to take your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Flynn can be found in the Appendix on page 43.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, General.

Mr. Braniff.

**STATEMENT OF WILLIAM BRANIFF, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
NATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR THE STUDY OF TERRORISM
AND RESPONSES TO TERRORISM (START), UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND**

Mr. BRANIFF. Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, and esteemed members of the committee, I would like to thank you on behalf of the START Consortium for inviting us to speak with you today.

In 2013, over 22,000 people were killed in nearly 8,500 terrorist attacks. When START releases the full Global Terrorism Database dataset for 2014, we anticipate it will include over 15,000 terrorist attacks.

Our preliminary data from the first 9 months of 2014 suggests that 7 of the 10 most lethal groups in 2014 were violent jihadist groups. And ISIL [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant], among them, conducted more terrorist attacks than any other terrorist organization.

The trend lines over the last few years are largely driven by two factors: first, the proliferation of groups associated with Al Qaeda in hotspots around the world; and, second, the rise of ISIL and its strategy of escalation through sectarian violence.

What we have, therefore, is the makings of a global competition involving the most violent terrorist organizations in the world. This is even more troubling when one considers that both the theoretical and empirical work in the terrorism studies field suggests that competition among terrorist groups is one of the most important predictors of increasing lethality over time.

To better understand this competition and its implications, I would like to contrast the operations and strategies of Al Qaeda and its associated movement, or AQAM, with those of ISIL.

Al Qaeda is waging a protracted war of attrition against the West, specifically aiming to bleed the United States. If they are able to attrite the American economic, military, or political will to remain engaged in the Muslim world, local jihadists can overpower apostate regimes and establish what they would consider to be proper theocracies.

To wage this war of attrition, Al Qaeda has sent operatives into conflict zones across the world to reorient the violence of militant organizations and individuals, refocusing their wrath on far-enemy targets, like Western embassies or tourist destinations.

Al Qaeda seeks to use spectacular mass-casualty attacks to incite heavy-handed military responses from Western and apostate governments that seemingly evidence the war on Islam that Al Qaeda portrays in its propaganda, thereby polarizing the Muslim and the non-Muslim worlds and enabling jihadists to mobilize for a civilizational conflict.

ISIL is not currently waging a war of attrition but one of escalation. Instead of inviting Muslim versus Western violence, it is benefiting from the resources already being mobilized by sectarian polarization that has taken place in Iraq and Syria and beyond, which it actively seeks to exacerbate. Instead of the far enemy, ISIL's military operations have focused on attacking competitors in their midst who do not submit to their ideological and organizational primacy and seizing the resources necessary to build the institutions of the caliphate.

Given this competition, there are several implications for U.S. policy and regional security.

The first: While Al Qaeda's far-enemy strategy relies on provocation to polarize and mobilize the masses, ISIL is ratcheting up already-elevated levels of sectarian tension in the post-Arab Spring world. The continued presence of the Assad regime in Syria serves as a more salient rallying cry for ISIL than for AQAM, and broad anti-Assad sentiment in Sunni-majority countries helps to dampen those governments' responses to both ISIL and groups like Jabhat al-Nusra, an Al Qaeda affiliate.

As sectarian tensions remain high, ISIL and aligned jihadist groups will foster and exploit those tensions. ISIL veterans will travel to new fronts outside of Iraq and Syria, bringing their escalation strategy and sectarianism with them.

In a worst-case scenario, this contagion effect runs the risk of inciting a sectarian civil war in the Muslim world, relegating the West to the role of observer, poorly positioned to take any meaningful action to protect itself or others.

In addition, every new ISIL front opens up a new set of grievance narratives and a new set of mobilization pathways for terrorist organizations seeking to radicalize and recruit foreign fighters.

Three, both ISIL and AQAM have incentives to conduct attacks against the West as part of this competition. For ISIL, attacks against the West can be used as a form of deterrence, making foreign countries think twice or pay the price for large-scale military interventions in Iraq and Syria.

We cannot be fooled into thinking that Al Qaeda's focus on the caliphate prevents them from actively seeking the capability to conduct attacks against the homeland. For Al Qaeda and its associated movement, ISIL's antagonist rise to prominence has created a crisis of legitimacy, incentivizing them to use far-enemy attacks to regain the spotlight.

Furthermore, if ISIL continues to murder Muslims and overstep its bounds, as we have recently seen with respect to the murder of a Jordanian pilot, Al Qaeda and its associated movement might wind up looking more legitimate and mainstream by comparison as long as they remain focused on the true enemies of Islam, the West. We cannot take, therefore, take pressure off of AQAM.

To conclude, we are seeing an escalating competition among violent Sunni extremist groups at a time when sectarian tensions are high and many governments' hold on legitimacy is weak. It is essential, therefore, that any U.S. strategy prioritizes working with Sunni nations and communities to marginalize violent Sunni extremists.

To do this, the U.S. must find a way to ease sectarian tensions and earn the trust of our Sunni partners, allowing them to focus their attention on marginalizing groups like ISIL and AQAM.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Braniff can be found in the Appendix on page 50.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Dr. Lynch.

**STATEMENT OF MARC LYNCH, PROFESSOR, THE GEORGE
WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**

Dr. LYNCH. First, I would like to thank Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, and the whole committee. It is a real honor to be on this panel and to have the chance to speak with you.

So, as you have heard from my colleagues, ISIL poses a serious threat to American interests, to the people of the region, to our partners in the region. And, of course, it is extremely important to not underestimate the nature of the threat or to misunderstand the nature of the threat.

I think it is important, however, to not perhaps exaggerate its novelty or perhaps the magnitude of the threat. These are not super-humans with unprecedented ability to form states or to seize territory or to inspire.

The world's history is full of insurgencies that have captured territory and sought to govern it by extracting resources from the local population. The world's history is full of insurgencies that have used graphic, violent terrorism to intimidate their enemies and to ensure control over their own local populations.

We have seen both Islamist and other ideological movements over world history. This is a dangerous and violent organization which must be confronted, but it is important that we place it in proper perspective.

I think the most important perspective that we need to keep is to understand the fundamental strategic dilemma that Islamic extremist groups have faced from their beginning, whether it is Islamic Jihad in Egypt or the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria or Al

Qaeda in the 2000s or ISIL today. And that fundamental strategic problem is that while they do absolutely have the vision that General Flynn described, the characteristics that General Flynn described, and that extreme dogmatism, the vast, vast majority of the Muslims of the world do not agree with them. And they have failed every time they have attempted to reach out and to mobilize the world's Muslims on their side.

The ideology and the strategy of Al Qaeda and ISIL is to create a class of civilizations, to create an unbridgeable divide between the Muslims of the world and the West. And what we must keep in mind as we formulate any kind of effective strategy is that the way to defeat ISIL, Al Qaeda, and all forms of violent extremism is to marginalize them and to form alliances with the vast majority of the world who reject their barbarism and who reject their extreme ideologies.

The face of Muslims in the minds of Americans and the face of Muslims in the mind of the world should not be Abu Bakr Baghdadi. It should not be Osama bin Laden. It should not be the faceless murderers of the journalists of Charlie Hebdo in Paris. It should be Yusor Abu-Salha; Razan Abu-Salha; Deah Barakat, the Steph Curry-loving dental student and volunteer for Syrian refugees who was murdered in North Carolina this week.

To defeat ISIL, America must be seen as their champion, not as their enemy. And if we are able to align ourselves with the aspirations and the hopes of Muslims all over the world, then ISIL can be defeated, and only then.

And so I do not disagree with General Flynn's characterization of the threat posed by ISIL, but I believe it is extremely important that we approach this threat from the perspective of the need to constantly seek to deflate their pretensions, to marginalize them, and to expose their extremism in the eyes not only of us but of the Muslims who they seek to recruit, to mobilize, and ultimately to lead.

Now, this was, I believe, one of the great accomplishments—the great bipartisan accomplishments of both the Bush administration after 9/11 and the Obama administration: the immediate understanding of this strategic divide and the need to not allow Al Qaeda after 9/11 to provoke this kind of clash of civilizations.

President Bush, despite some missteps early on, I think did a fantastic job of trying to reach out to the Muslims of the United States and to ensure that this divide did not open up. And I think that is the bipartisan commitment that we should build on today.

Now, in my prepared statement, I go through in some detail explanations for why ISIL has emerged in the form that it has today. I won't repeat those here. Let me just hit some of the bullet points, because I think it is important to place this into a specific political context.

Ranking Member Smith, in his opening statement, mentioned the failures of governance, and I think this is extremely important. The failure of the Arab uprisings is a key part of the emergence of ISIL in the form it is today. An enormous number of young Muslims, young Arabs around the Middle East have seen their hopes raised and then crushed. The military coup in Egypt is a particu-

larly defining point in proving, unfortunately, to a large number of people that peaceful political participation is not an option.

If we are going to respond to ISIL in the way, as again, I agree with General Flynn, that we must, we need to address those underlying causes of despair, of alienation, and the absence of alternative paths, which is building the possible pool of recruits for ISIL.

That includes reversing the sectarian misgovernment of Iraq. It includes trying to find some kind of peaceful de-escalation of the war in Syria. And it means trying to find some way to align the United States with the forces of moderate and peaceful change.

That is no easy task. I have some ideas about how we might go about doing that, but for now I will simply stop, and I welcome everyone's questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Lynch can be found in the Appendix on page 69.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Again, I appreciate the testimony from each of you.

I would like to ask, hopefully, just a brief question from each of you.

General Flynn, towards the end of your statement, you make a point that an AUMF should not be overly constrained. You have had a lot of experience fighting these folks in the Middle East and South Asia. Do you have an opinion about how difficult it would be for our troops to follow a restriction that said they could not engage in enduring offensive ground combat operations?

General FLYNN. Yes.

So we need to be very clear in this AUMF that, you know, may come out of an agreement between the legislative and executive branches here. When we give our military commanders a mission, we should allow them to execute that mission and not overly constrain them with approved authorities but then having to come back to the administration for permission.

So if we authorize the use of force to do something with these many times fleeting opportunities out there that our military forces see and then they have to come back up through a bureaucratic process to get permission even though there is an authority given to them, then either, you know, we need to review those authorities and those permissions or we need to change the commanders because we apparently don't trust them to do the job that we have given them to do. So that is a real problem today.

Give the commanders the authority to execute the mission that they have been given. If they are not the right people, remove them and put somebody else in there that can do that. Otherwise, allow them to do the things that they have been assigned, tasked, and are very capable of doing in what is currently the AUMF that we have.

We have become so overly bureaucratic in coming up through the system to get permission to basically do things that, frankly, colonels on the battlefield or captains at sea are very capable of doing.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Braniff, I was struck in your testimony that, as I read it, just in the last 12 months, we have seen a dramatic rise in these terrorist organizations and in their attacks.

Now, as I understand it, one of the things your organization does is keep track of these with objective metrics. And am I reading that right, that even in the last year we have seen this problem get dramatically worse?

Mr. BRANIFF. Mr. Chairman, if you compared the most violent terrorist organizations in 2013 to those in 2014, the level of violence from ISIL, the Taliban, Shabaab, Boko Haram, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan have increased from between 2013 to 2014, according to preliminary data. Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Libya have all experienced increases in terrorist violence between 2013, in our preliminary data, from 2014. Pakistan is the only, sort of, affected nation which has seen a decrease, out of the countries where Al Qaeda and its associated movement are active.

So we have seen a year-on-year increase over the last 12 months and over the 12 months before that and the 12 months before that, so the trend line is continuing to rise.

A partial explanation is that a lot of the strategy now focuses on trying to build capabilities of partner nations to deal with this issue, and that is a slow process, and so things may get worse before they get better. That is an opportunistic read of the scenario. A pessimistic read of the scenario is that these organizations have enjoyed greater safe haven in a post-Arab Spring world and have seized on the less stable governments and are exploiting that safe haven.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay.

So, Dr. Lynch, I am a little perplexed by a sentence you have in your prepared statement that says, "The U.S. has thus far crafted an effective strategy in responding to ISIL, which has halted its momentum."

Is that the way you see the developments over the last year or so?

Dr. LYNCH. Thank you, Chairman.

Yes. I actually think that the way the administration has crafted a strategy as an initial step has been quite effective.

They managed to leverage the increased military commitment in Iraq into the most important move, which was a change in the Government of Iraq and the removal of Prime Minister Maliki, who, in my opinion, had carried out a campaign of sectarian misgovernment and corruption which had lost and squandered all of the gains of the previous years.

By managing to then get a new Iraqi Prime Minister willing and able to reach out to Iraqi Sunnis and then to use airpower and limited military support, the momentum of ISIL has been halted. They are no longer able to advance. They suffered a serious defeat in Kobane, thanks to coalition airpower.

And they have now seen a significant reversal in the eyes of Arab public opinion after the brutal murder of Jordanian pilot Moaz al-Kasasbeh. And momentum matters for them, because their appeal was rooted in the idea that they were a winner. And now people aren't so sure, and I think we might actually see people jumping off the bandwagon faster than we think.

The CHAIRMAN. I appreciate it. Obviously, I hope the optimistic scenarios prove right. I worry that we see momentum through our eyes, not necessarily through their eyes.

But, at this time, I would yield to Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just following up on that rather key point, there are problems all over the world. Yemen, ironically, is a Shiite uprising that has, you know, overturned the government there, which gets us into the whole issue that if, you know, decent governance in that region is going to depend upon, believe it or not, Saudi Arabia and Iran figuring out how to get along in that part of the world, because neither one is going to be able to vanquish the other, and, in the meantime, they are doing enormous damage to each other. But that is a subject, perhaps, for a whole other hearing.

But this notion that, you know, it is all falling apart, these guys are, as you said, Dr. Lynch, superman, they are going to take over everything, and I think the analysis of ISIL is interesting. You know, you watch the news reports and then the chairman's comments about how they are still spreading, they are still going. That is what people believe. That is simply not the case.

Several months ago, and I am going to get my timeline wrong, when they went rolling through, you know, out of Syria, went rolling through Iraq, took Mosul, everyone was saying, oh, my goodness, they are going to be in Baghdad next week. Well, they are not, and they are never going to be. They were, as you mentioned, rolled out of Kobane.

They have not taken any territory since that initial surge, and they have given back territory. They were also within miles of Erbil, and, again, my timeline is off here, but a few months before. But with allied support and with support for the Kurds, they were pushed back.

So we have to keep this in a realistic perspective, because I think our greatest strength and possibility here is what you said: These guys can't govern. They cannot deliver for the Muslim population. And in Mosul right now, it is falling apart. The electricity is off pretty much every day. Nobody is picking up the garbage. They can't govern. The people there are only staying with them out of fear.

So I do believe that ISIL's momentum has been blunted. And it is really interesting; it has been blunted in part with the help of the U.S. military, but it has been blunted more by their own weaknesses. And that is what we have to remember, and that is what I want to ask General Flynn about.

You know, I get this, it is an existential threat. I agree with you. And, therefore, we have to, you know, amass all of our forces and figure out how to defeat them.

But, fundamentally, do you disagree with the statement that U.S. military might is simply not in a position to defeat this ideology because of this clash of civilizations, because of the way the Muslim world looks at Western aggression, and that the only way that we are going to be successful is if we get moderate Muslims to rise up against these folks and support them? I mean, do you think it would be good to drop a whole bunch of troops down in the

middle of Syria and Iraq right now and go get them? Or don't you see, sort of, how that would perhaps play into the hands of ISIL?

And, if so, what does it mean to say we are going to mount all of our, you know, military might and go get them? Don't we have a little bit of a Gordian knot in that regard?

General FLYNN. So the answer, quick answer is——

Mr. SMITH. Sorry, that was, like, six questions.

General FLYNN. Yeah, I know.

Mr. SMITH. It is early in the morning.

General FLYNN. You typically do that to me.

Mr. SMITH. Yeah.

General FLYNN. So, overall, the answer is yes.

Mr. SMITH. That you believe you——

General FLYNN. Yes, that I don't think, I don't believe, what you just said about, you know, dropping in, you know, hundreds of thousands, or U.S. forces, you also said that they are an existential threat. I wouldn't sit here today and say ISIS is an existential threat to this country.

Mr. SMITH. The broader ideology.

General FLYNN. But the broader ideology is one that will get inside of our bloodstream, get inside of our DNA, if you will, and will permeate over time if we don't do something about it now. So it doesn't help us to just kind of wait to do something.

Now, when I describe, you know, in what I recommended about, you know, the combination of the elements of national power, I mean, you just look at the information campaign that is being waged not by just ISIS but by Al Qaeda writ large and the way that they are able to do it, the sophistication that they are able to do it, I mean, that campaign alone, the military has some little bits and pieces of trying to counter that on a tactical battlefield, but there has to be a broader imagination that this country, working with partners and working with some of these, you know, so-called moderate nations, and I say that in my statement about, we have partners out there, and, you know, we have to really be honest with ourselves about some of these partners.

Mr. SMITH. Yeah.

General FLYNN. I mean, we can't continue to fund and do all these kinds of things and have some of these nations sit at the table with the United States of America when, in fact, we know that they are funding some of these organizations. That is a diplomatic tool that we have to leverage.

And there are economic tools that we have to leverage. When we say that we are going after terrorist financing and we are going to stop this guy or we are going to shut down this money being made by the Baiji oil refinery, those are tactical things.

We have to look at how are we dealing with the moderate, frankly, the moderate Arab world and these nations where we do have economic partnerships and relationships. And we need to ask them, are they doing everything they can from the role of being moderate——

Mr. SMITH. Let me clarify. And I think Dr. Lynch would agree. You know, I am not going to say that there is a moderate, you know, Muslim nation that, we are talking about more individual people and groups than we are one nation or another.

General FLYNN. Yeah.

Mr. SMITH. And, you know, for instance, I mean, the biggest success that we had in Iraq was the Anbar Awakening. And that wasn't a government. That was Sunni tribes—

General FLYNN. Yeah.

Mr. SMITH [continuing]. Rising up and saying, and you were there. You know how—

General FLYNN. Well, I agree. I mean, it took 50,000 more troops, though, too. The Anbar Awakening was incentivized by another 50,000 U.S. American troops on the ground.

Mr. SMITH. That is a fascinating argument, because, you know, the Anbar Awakening was a force multiplier of, like, 2 million.

General FLYNN. Yeah, but, I mean, I talk to some of these individuals almost on a daily basis who were involved in this.

So I guess what I am telling you, Congressman, is that we have to be far more sophisticated, and we really do have to use our imagination to defeat this ideology. Tactically, we need to go after ISIS, you know, and then, frankly, any of these other safe havens.

But we have to be more sophisticated in our application of all the instruments of national power to be able to achieve what it is that I believe we need to achieve over a long period of time, as you recognize in your opening statement.

Mr. SMITH. And I won't disagree with that. The only thing I will say is I worry a great deal about the notion that people are focused on the U.S. military as the solution to this problem.

General FLYNN. Yeah.

Mr. SMITH. And I worry when we talk about, oh, you know, the AUMF has to be open-ended so we can go anywhere anytime. And believe me, I love the military, you know.

General FLYNN. Yeah.

Mr. SMITH. You work with them, you ask them if they can do something; is the answer ever no?

General FLYNN. No.

Mr. SMITH. It is not.

General FLYNN. It is not.

Mr. SMITH. I mean, you tell them, you know, you have five guys, can you defeat these, yeah. I mean, that is just how they are oriented. And that is terrific.

But that isn't always the right strategy; because sometimes there are things that military might can't do and, in this case, can really sort of turn it back around on us if we aren't careful.

General FLYNN. But there is, and I am sorry because I don't want to go into too much of this. But there is a benefit to applying pressure on an enemy.

Mr. SMITH. Absolutely.

General FLYNN. So you have to not let them have a sound night's sleep anywhere where these vicious individuals exist and groups exist.

And, in the meantime, all the other pieces that we have to bring to bear, and that is really my, that is my argument. And that is one administration to the next, because I think the last administration really struggled and maybe came to that realization later on.

Mr. SMITH. It is not an easy answer.

General FLYNN. It is not. It is not an easy answer.

Mr. SMITH. I mean, it is not easy to know when to apply force and when not to. And, you know, there is a lot more tactics than strategy.

You have been generous with the time, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Miller.

Mr. MILLER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

General Flynn, in 2002, the authorization for use of military force basically said the President is authorized to use the Armed Forces of the United States as he determines to be necessary and appropriate.

Why do you think we now have an AUMF before us that puts restrictions on it on things that the President claims he can do without an AUMF?

General FLYNN. I guess my answer to that would be, whatever the decision is between this body and the executive branch of government, we have to make sure, in one sense, we have to play our cards very close to our chest, meaning don't discount any option that the United States of America has by telegraphing what those options are or are not going to be, you know, we are not going to commit troops or we are not going to do this or that. So I just think that we have to play a very smart card game with the AUMF.

I think on this AUMF thing, though, is that, like I said, that is not a comprehensive strategy. That is a component of something that we need. And, like I said to the chairman, we have to make sure that when we lay this out to our military forces, primarily, and, to a degree, some inside of our intelligence community, that they have the full authority to be able to execute the tasks that they are going to be assigned. Otherwise, you know, you are tying our hands behind our back, so to speak, and we are slowing the system down through unnecessary bureaucracy.

Mr. MILLER. Thank you.

Dr. Lynch, do you really think that a group of barbarian thugs who would make a fellow human being kneel down before them and cut their heads off really care if they are marginalized? Or do you really think that a group of barbarian thugs who would put a fellow Muslim in a cage, douse him with gas, set him on fire, and watch him burn to death really care if they are marginalized?

And if you think that, how long do you think it will take for this marginalization to take place?

Dr. LYNCH. Thank you, Congressman. It is a great question and a really important one.

I don't think they care. But the nature of their not caring is extremely important.

So, basically, when you are a group like Al Qaeda or a group like ISIL, you have two basic strategies you can pursue, the same as an election here, right? You can play to your base, or you can try and reach out to the median voter.

And what you are seeing with ISIL is very much a base strategy, right? They have decided that they want to mobilize the already-radicalized, the most dangerous people, the disenfranchised, the ones who are already radicalized, and they want to get them out to Syria and Iraq and to join.

And so what we are seeing is that, at least by press accounts and open-source accounts, the flow of foreign fighters is increasing. In other words, those brutal videos are actually inspiring that very small number of people and getting them to leave Cairo, to leave Tunis, and come out to ISIL. But, at the same time, they are alienating the broader mainstream public.

And so the way I would reframe your question is, is this drying up their pool of recruits faster than they can get them and extract them and bring them into their fight? And I think that the answer to that is still unclear. And that is why I am advocating a strategy in which we try and accelerate their marginalization and alienation from that broader pool of potential recruits.

And so, no, I don't think they care in the slightest. Many of you remember the old battles between al-Zarqawi and Zawahiri about the strategy of Al Qaeda and Iraq. And Zarqawi's response to criticism that he was alienating Muslims by butchering Shiites was saying, I don't care, I am closer to God than you are. Right? I don't care about the mainstream Muslim who has already abandoned God. He chose a base strategy, which is what ISIL has done, as well.

And so we need to recognize that and then try and make them pay the cost for that base strategy.

Mr. MILLER. And that cost is?

Dr. LYNCH. That cost is to continue to, and I think we have already started this, and I think our Arab allies have done this, is a really strong strategic communications campaign to highlight their barbarity, to highlight their extremism, to deflate their pretensions to power, to expose the realities of life in ISIL-governed territories, and to puncture their mystique in such a way that the alienated, disenfranchised youth in Tunis or in Libya doesn't see it as an attractive, noble, or heroic thing to go and join this group.

And I think that that is the way we need to approach them, to undermine them and deflate them rather than to exaggerate their capabilities.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. O'Rourke.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General Flynn, thank you for your testimony and for your service. I think you made a number of excellent points, including the need to have a clear and comprehensive strategy from the administration before we move forward with an authorization for the use of military force.

You also talked about our need to rethink our relationships with our regional allies. And I think you said something to the effect of, if they failed to adhere to global standards and norms and values—

General FLYNN. International law.

Mr. O'ROURKE [continuing]. And international law, then we need to rethink our ties. And I think you maybe even said cut off those ties.

When I think about our allies there, the royal family in Saudi Arabia, the prior leadership in Yemen, al-Maliki prior in Iraq, Sisi, these are governments that, in many cases, are amongst the most

corrupt or venal or repressive in the world, and yet they are our allies in this fight.

How do we pursue a strategy in that region and be consistent to the advice that you gave us, which I think is really good advice? And I think those repressive regimes and our relationships with them complicate our ability to be effective in the Middle East.

General FLYNN. Yeah. Thanks very much for asking that question.

This is the essence of the problem. This is not a military phenomenon that we are facing, back to the ranking member's, you know, missive about what he was talking about with military and boots on the ground. And everybody sort of throws that phrase around. We need to stop using that, by the way. We need to really understand what does that mean.

This is a social, a cultural, and a psychological phenomenon, particularly in the Arab world. And the potential breakdown of, sort of, Arab world order over time if we do not change this mindset and really move some of these countries to change their internal behavior, what we saw in Egypt as an example of essentially three regimes, now with President el-Sisi in there. And what President el-Sisi is trying to do is he is just trying to bring a sense of security and stability before they can even think about returning to any kind of form of prosperity.

I think a country like Jordan, the King there and how they treat their population and how they are being, you know, a really exceptional moderate example within this very, very difficult part of the world that we are in, there are others, there are other templates, if you will, out there.

But the underlying conditions that I think everybody recognizes, all of us recognize, if those underlying conditions don't change, then what is going to happen is this problem is going to continue to grow, and it is going to undermine the stability of these countries to the point where they are going to lose, they are eventually going to lose.

And it is not just Iraq and Syria and what we are seeing there. I mean, we were already talking about, you know, a lot of other places around the trans-region area that are at risk. I mean, what just happened with this Houthi separatist movement down in Yemen, this movement has been going on for a long, long time. And then, of course, you got Al Qaeda that took over this military base.

I mean, Libya, those two states right now, and you know, we should look at ourselves, those two states right now are failing or failed states or will become that way, because who will recognize Yemen? Will it be us, or is it going to be Iran? Because Iran fully backs that Houthi separatist movement that just took over Yemen. And that was a country that we were trying to defeat this threat, this Sunni version of radical Islam.

So, I mean, this is a really, that is the essence of the problem. And we have to look at how do we want to act. When somebody sits at the table of the United States of America, they better be sitting there fully recognizing international law and at least having a recognition of internationally accepted norms and behaviors. If they don't, we are being hypocritical.

Mr. O'ROURKE. And I wonder if we have the will to act on that and to really deliver some consequences, withdrawing military aid, isolating those countries, rethinking our relationships. And, in the past, we have proven unable to do that or unwilling for probably important tactical or strategic reasons. And I think we will really be tested right now.

My time is up. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General FLYNN. Just real quickly, we are not chained by oil to the, you know, the United States is no longer chained to the Middle East for oil. That is a big deal.

So, sorry.

Mr. O'ROURKE. Yeah.

General FLYNN. Sorry, Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Appreciate it.

Mr. Lamborn.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Flynn, I have a question for you. I am really concerned that, just this week, President Barack Obama was interviewed and compared fighting ISIS to a big-city mayor fighting crime. And that really troubles me, because there is no comparison. That is a horrible and poor analogy.

In a big city, if you have criminals like muggers, carjackers, drug dealers, they are not trying to kill the mayor and take over the city government, which is what ISIS is trying to do in the various countries in the Middle East. And they want to take over and destabilize Jordan and Saudi Arabia, ultimately go after Israel.

There is just no comparison to a big-city mayor fighting crime. Are you troubled by that type of analogy? And does that indicate to you, like it does to me, that he just doesn't get it?

General FLYNN. Well, what I have said is that you cannot defeat an enemy that you do not admit exists.

And I really, really strongly believe that the American public needs and wants moral, intellectual, and really strategic clarity and courage on this threat.

I mean, there is no comparison. And it is not to take away the danger that exists with the thugs and the criminals that are in our own system, but that is not what it is that we are facing in this discussion that we are having right now. It is totally different.

Mr. LAMBORN. Also, let me change subjects and ask about Guantanamo Bay. And there was an interesting exchange over in the Senate the other day. And my friend and colleague Senator Tom Cotton of Arkansas was talking to an administration official and making the point that the fight was brought to our homeland before Guantanamo Bay ever existed and, even if the President succeeds in shutting it down, the fight will continue against us.

So do you agree with me that it is important to have a place where we can detain the worst of the worst, which takes them out of the fight, until such time as maybe they go before a military tribunal or in some way face justice and that that outweighs whatever propaganda effect the bad guys have, who will find something to criticize us for if they don't have that?

General FLYNN. Yeah. Thank you for asking that question.

A couple of things. There are three ways to deal with a terrorist: You kill them, you capture them, or you turn them. And you work

with these partner nations around the world. And the Saudis actually had a pretty effective program a few years back where they were turning them, dealing with their families and things like that. But those are the three ways to deal with a terrorist.

We say, and this gets back to the question on the AUMF. Because, right now, we are not capturing anybody. I mean, we might go out and detain somebody, you know, and it is work between the military and the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], like we did with this guy in Libya. But there are a lot of others out there that we probably would benefit from capturing.

I mean, we used to say, when I was in the special operations community, that had we not had the ability to professionally interrogate those that we captured, the high-value targets or the mid-value targets, we might as well take that Cadillac and bring it on home and park it in the garage. Because the capturing of individuals in this environment is actually, it is the best form of intelligence that you can get, period, bar none.

I have lived it. I have run those facilities, and we know how to do them very professionally because we learned a really ugly lesson, you know, over 10 years ago now. So you have to be able to do that.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Cooper.

Oh, he is not here.

Ms. Graham.

Ms. GRAHAM. First, thank you very much for being here this morning.

You have touched a bit on other terrorist groups in the region. Could you please provide an update on Hezbollah?

Thank you.

General FLYNN. I will give it a shot, and you guys can talk.

I mean, so Hezbollah is an Iranian-backed group. I believe we are still designating them as a terrorist organization, our State Department.

Hezbollah is deeply involved in Syria. So they are fighting in Syria. Members of Hezbollah are fighting, and they are actually leading and doing some of the, sort of, what I would call special-operations-type training of some of the Syrian forces.

Hezbollah is involved in Yemen. Hezbollah is certainly involved in Lebanon and some of the disruption of things in that particular country. And Hezbollah is involved in Iraq, as well. So members of Hezbollah are, in fact, inside of Iraq fighting with what I would describe as what we used to call the Badr Corps organization, which we know is led by members of Iran's IRGC [Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps].

So Hezbollah is a very dangerous organization. They are responsible for killing many, many Americans, and we need to not let them, sort of, get a pass on any of this.

Dr. LYNCH. Thank you, Congresswoman.

Let me just say very quickly that Hezbollah actually has been in a very difficult position for the last several years because of its role in Syria, which has been quite controversial. It is exposed now in ways that it never was before. It enjoyed, in the past, a very solid

and basically impregnable base in the south of Lebanon and in the Shia community of Lebanon, and from there it was able to play a dominant role in not just Shia politics in Lebanon but in the overall Lebanese political system.

Now, Lebanon is a state that is hanging on by its fingernails, more than a million Syrian refugees, growing signs of sectarian conflict and violence, and even a lot, I mean, there are increasing signs of grumblings among the Shia middle-class community itself, saying, "What happened to protecting our interests? Why are our boys going out and dying in Syria?", but, also, at the same time, radicalization of those Shia communities, saying, "Why aren't you fighting Israel? Why aren't you doing more?"

So the leadership of Hezbollah is clearly, I mean, yes, it is a clearly a dangerous and extremely capable and robust organization. But this is probably the most difficult political situation it has faced in many, many years. It no longer can claim to speak for a broad resistance to Israel. Nobody believes that anymore because they have seen, no Sunnis believe that because they have seen Hezbollah men out there killing and murdering Sunni civilians, so they have lost that card. And they are much weaker because the Lebanese state is much weaker.

So it is a very difficult time for them, and they are having, I would say, a very difficult time navigating this new situation.

Mr. BRANIFF. Thank you, Congresswoman.

The only thing I would add is that I mentioned the word "sectarianism" numerous times in my oral testimony. I find this to be a very important issue that we have to understand, that one of the ways that extremist ideologies can become more mainstream is when societies are polarized and people feel like they have to pick a side, that they have no choice but to pick a side, and the only candidates for their vote, so to speak, are extremist organizations in this very polarized environment.

So I worry about the sectarian violence in Syria being exported to other neighboring countries and creating a wider sectarian conflict. Hezbollah is one of the organizations that could be a conduit for that spread of sectarian violence. And Lebanon, as a country with a very interesting, sort of, denominational system of representation, is really the kind of country that would be vulnerable to sectarian violence going forward.

Ms. GRAHAM. Thank you. I appreciate the update.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Wittman.

Mr. WITTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you so much for joining us today. Thank you for your testimony.

General Flynn, how worried are you about American citizens becoming radicalized, training overseas, and returning back to the United States?

And are there additional steps that the U.S. should take in addressing those citizens that travel to train with ISIS in Syria and Iraq and then later return back to the United States and the threats that they would pose here?

I would like to get your perspective.

General FLYNN. Yeah. First, I think that our FBI and the leadership of the FBI is doing a phenomenal job dealing with this issue here in the homeland.

Just to give you a little perspective, when somebody shows up to Syria, okay, and this has been going on for a while, they do a little vetting of who these individuals are. And if it is somebody who just came over, you know, to sort of get their jihad on, so to speak, they may just tell them, "You are going to be a suicide bomber. Here is what we are going to do, here is where you are going to operate, and go forth and do good."

In the other parts of the vetting, though, they look for individuals who have different skill sets, who have savvy with the Internet, who have some leadership skills, who maybe have some engineering capabilities. So they are sophisticated in how they recruit, particularly when they arrive.

And those individuals then get put into a different pipeline. They may not get put into the suicide-attacker or VBIED [vehicle-borne improvised explosive device] pipeline; they may get put into a different pipeline. And those are the individuals that there will be, sort of, a different future for them to maybe come back to this country and get involved in additional recruiting, additional activities, and maybe, you know, larger-scale types of attacks that we are trying to avoid.

So I just think that, a variety of reasons why they get recruited. The Internet is a big, big part of this. I think our FBI is doing the best job that they can. But we really need to recognize and track who these persons are.

And I will be honest with you. If somebody is going to conspire to fight against us, which is essentially what they are doing, there also has to be a discussion, at least, about their citizenship.

Mr. WITTMAN. So you think then the additional step is to look very carefully at those people that travel. Of course, my concern, too, is that Turkey is a conduit for people traveling into Syria and those areas. So are there additional steps we should take in working with Turkey to be more aggressive with them, looking specifically at those folks that have left the country, but some kind of provision on their return, about the conditions on their return back to the United States? Give me your perspective.

General FLYNN. Yeah, so the combination of intelligence and law enforcement is a big deal and gets right at what you are talking about. So we have to make sure that there are good mechanisms in place, processes in place to rapidly share intelligence, rapidly share law enforcement, sensitive law enforcement information. And we need to be able to deal with a variety of partners, Turkey being probably one of the principal ones right now because if we know somebody is getting on a plane out of LaGuardia or Dulles to fly over to Ankara, then we need to make sure that we recognize who they are and they are being tracked; they have the right visas. And then, you know, Turkey needs to know what they are doing over there. And this is one of these difficult things because we are trying to also protect our own freedom to travel and all that sort of business. But we have got to know, why are you going there? Are you part of a nongovernmental organization? Are you part of a pri-

vate organization that is going to provide some humanitarian assistance, or are you going over there for some other ill-gotten gain?

Mr. WITTMAN. Let me ask you this: We have seen what is happening in Yemen. It is collapsing before our eyes. Our U.S. Marines, our embassy staff, the embassy now is abandoned. We see the chaos that is going on there. We see Iranian influence there in that particular region. It was not long ago pointed to that this was one of our foreign policy successes and how we dealt with terrorism; that we were in support of the government there; that our counterterrorism efforts were successful. A couple of questions. What went wrong? And is this an indicator of a broader weakness or failure of U.S. foreign policy?

General FLYNN. From my perspective, the last decade-plus of war, if I had to give you one lesson learned, that lesson learned would be that we failed and we continue to fail to understand the threats that we face, and that failure is leading to a mismatch in strategy and resources that we are applying against these threats.

And, therefore, that failure is leading to these types of, you know, things that we are seeing in a Yemen and in other parts of the greater Arab world. And I think the second-, third-, fourth-order effects of Libya, I am really concerned about post a period of time in Afghanistan, based on what we have already heard we are going to do, and I noticed in The Washington Post today there is an article there about, you know, we are rethinking our timeline for departure from Afghanistan. I think that is appropriate. So that failure led to a mismatch in resources and strategy as to how we applied it against this enemy.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Davis.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for being here and for your presentations.

General Flynn, could you follow up a bit on your comment just now because you are talking about the lessons learned about the mismatch and the threats. And would you make that same analysis about even our not understanding the country of Iraq, for example, when we went into Iraq and may have created more enemies than friends. How would you respond to that?

General FLYNN. Yeah, I think that that is very, you know, I mean what you are implying is very true. And I think that we, you know, in the spectrum of conflict, when we define the spectrum of conflict, we in the military look at it from peace to war. The political dimension of our country has to look at it from peace and get us back to peace in order to get us out of war. And we did not, we don't do a really good job thinking past the point of conflict or the point of war.

And we have to do that. And I think that is part of this debate, as the ranking member was highlighting, that we have to not just throw military resources at this thing; we have to be far more sophisticated. But that is not comprehensive right now. That sophistication, I don't see it. And I have been studying this problem for a long time, and I am, you know, I am hopeful that we can get our act together. But it has to be one that is very, very comprehensive, and it is going to be a multigenerational problem.

And there are moderates out there that we do need to encourage. Somebody sent me a note the other day and said, Hey, you know, there is 126 subject-matters experts, you know, clerics and others in the Muslim world that came out strong against ISIS. Why aren't there 126,000? Why are there only 126? I mean, there is that many mosques in Baghdad. I mean, there should be thousands, and there should be leaders of these countries that we are dealing with that need to stand up and make a statement, make a strong statement, about what it is that we are doing or not doing. So——

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you. Right now I think there are, perhaps, some opportunities that we are not using. I am thinking of the Peshmerga in Kurdistan. Have you had any thoughts about that, why we are not utilizing and doing as good a job as we can in really facilitating greater involvement on their behalf? They are asking for it. We are not doing it.

General FLYNN. Yeah, I mean, I just think that is a great question to ask, you know, especially from this committee. So, yeah, we could do more, and we could give them more support. We could help in training them and getting them more sophisticated and really putting in the right kinds of military tools. But that is, you know, again, we need to be careful that we don't always get drawn back into what is actually the easiest part of a strategy, which is to throw a military force at it.

Mrs. DAVIS. Can't agree with you more.

General FLYNN. I mean, you know, so we just have to be more sophisticated is my——

Mrs. DAVIS. Yeah, thank you. If I can go on.

General FLYNN. Go ahead.

Mrs. DAVIS. Shifting to another region, the Boko Haram. Before a Senate Intelligence Committee meeting yesterday, the growing connections between ISIS and the Boko Haram was mentioned. I don't know whether you happened to hear that discussion, but shouldn't, I mean, where even in terms of the AUMF are we thinking about that connection and the, I guess, horrible potential that that would bring as well?

General FLYNN. Yeah, I will let Bill answer this too because I think he mentioned Boko Haram in his statement. And one, number one, Boko Haram is incredibly vicious. I mean, my God, look at what they have done to the children, young women. I mean, these are children. So, and I can't put that aside, but now so the connection between these organizations is very real. And we know, we know, that Al Qaeda, so the Al Qaeda command and control, Al Qaeda senior leaders were, in fact, dealing with Boko Haram, you know, in a sort of a cursory way when bin Laden was still alive. Okay, so this is not some connection that just all of a sudden happened and Boko Haram has just popped up. And, hopefully, you have seen General Rodriguez, our Commander of AFRICOM [U.S. Africa Command], recently talking about we need a full sort of counterinsurgency effort. And, again, I think there are seven or eight nations in Africa that are trying to come to grips with dealing with Boko Haram right now. They just postponed their elections. I mean, again, this is a long-term problem, and these groups are, in fact, connected.

Mrs. DAVIS. Thank you. I think my time is up, and perhaps Dr. Lynch can bring this up later, or—

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Coffman.

Mr. COFFMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just a question about ISIS. I served in Iraq with the Marine Corps, in 2005, in Ramadi and Fallujah; in 2006, in Haditha, Barwana, Haqlaniyah in the Western Euphrates River Valley. And what I found in the Sunni Arab population is they clearly didn't like us. We have upset the apple cart. They saw the government in Baghdad as a Shia-dominated government, sectarian government that was against them. And they were against the government. But when they saw later on a path, the fissures between the Al Qaeda element and the local insurgents became more significant over time. And I think when they saw a path where they could be a part of the government, then those fissures, you know, exploded between the two. And I found them to be a very moderate people. Boys and girls went to school together in these towns; secular curriculum, annual exams, and very dependent upon a lot of government services. And so it is hard for me to envision them subjugated to this radical Islamic group, ISIS. Just, they were temporarily in line with Al Qaeda, and then they broke up. And so what is the prognosis here? And I will refer to each one of you.

Dr. LYNCH. Thank you, Congressman.

I think you are absolutely right about that and about the nature of the Iraqi Sunni community and the resentment, both of us, and especially of the Shia-dominated government. And I think one of the great strategic missed opportunities that we have had in the Middle East was that Nouri al-Maliki was unable to capitalize on that and to rebuild connections with the Sunni community. Instead, he decided to rule in the sectarian way going after Sunni, Shia, Sunni leaders, not getting the Awakenings forces into the security forces. It was a tragic missed opportunity.

I think that you are also absolutely right about the long-term implausibility of people like this being willing to live under ISIL. The problem right now, though, I think is that the sectarianism has become so intense and so deeply engrained. You are talking about populations with enormous levels of displacement, both internal and refugees; people who have seen family members being butchered on sectarian grounds; and an enormous amount of mistrust of state institutions like the Ministry of the Interior and the Iraqi security forces, which makes it very difficult for them to look at the Iraqi Government as a partner. And I think that until they are able to look at the Iraqi Government and see it as a viable partner, then it is going to be difficult for them to make that leap that they made back in 2006, 2007.

That is why I think getting a new Prime Minister in place and trying to begin some serious security service reforms, institutional reforms, is what you need to do in order to win in Iraq. And reversing that sectarianism is going to be extraordinarily difficult at this point, but we have to begin taking those steps.

I think the National Guard project that they have begun to work on I think is absolutely the right way to do it, something which is institutionalized and can't simply be dissolved at the stroke of a

pen, the way that the promises to incorporate the Awakenings were done back in 2008, 2009.

Mr. BRANIFF. Thank you, Mr. Congressman.

I would just reiterate START researcher Mansoor Moaddel has done extensive surveys in the Muslim world, and the Iraqi population is overwhelmingly secular in how they respond to national level polls, even within the last 2 years. And, to me, if sectarianism trumps secularism the way it has in Iraq because of these sort of identity politics that are being leveraged by groups like ISIL, we better make sure that our national strategy to address violent extremism in other places really pushes back on sectarianism because it is such a powerful force. It is a force of nature. And if we don't deal with sectarianism, all right, ISIL and AQAM and these groups have a relatively easy time forcing people to pick a side through violence.

General FLYNN. Really briefly, a lot of lessons learned between the way Zarqawi operated and the way al-Baghdadi is operating. And that has been a discussion within the ranks of the Al Qaeda movement. Okay, so they learned lessons from the way Zarqawi did things, and al-Baghdadi is avoiding many of those mistakes.

And then, really, three things. Incredible levels of corruption, this is within the governments, okay, in this case, Iraq. Lack of inclusiveness, which is very real, and, you know, even though the new President that is in there now still there is not a sense of that by the people. And just the real desperate economic conditions that these people live within, and that is just, that is going to be a difficult thing to change, but it could change because these countries actually have the wealth to provide for their citizens.

Mr. COFFMAN. I am out of time. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Gabbard.

Ms. GABBARD. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for being here today. Each of you have made points throughout this morning about how this sectarianism is a driver for violence, how the trust of the Sunni tribes and people must be earned in order to take the oxygen away that currently exists, especially in Iraq, for ISIS. How can this be done with this current strategy? You have talked about new leadership in place. You have talked about different rhetoric, a different way of doing things, but the fact and the reality is that Iran's influence over this current government in Iraq continues as it has been. Their ability to have any sense of control over the Shia militias and who they are attacking and what they are doing does not exist. And unless you go to a different model of governance and go away from this attachment to this continued policy of one central government in Iraq and move to something where you are actually truly empowering the Kurds, we are not having to funnel everything through the Baghdad government, where, at this point, even a small margin of the weapons and ammunition that we are sending is getting to them, and empower the Sunnis, and empower the Shias in some type of three-state solution, how is this current strategy a winning strategy to defeat ISIS, unless you get to this core of this issue?

General FLYNN. I will just quickly, I believe that we are going to not go back to the way things were. The breakdown of the boundaries within this region are going to be incredibly difficult to

get back to, not impossible, but I just don't see that happening any time soon, potentially in my lifetime.

I would say that Iran is the greater problem. They do not see inclusiveness of Sunnis, you know, from the Iranian viewpoint. And I think that they, like you, saw in Yemen recently with some of the chanting that we saw, you are seeing in Iraq things occur that are clearly Iranian influenced and against everything that we are trying to do. So I will leave it at that.

Dr. LYNCH. Thanks for the question. The problem with Iraq, you are absolutely right about the role of Iran in Iraq. It is pervasive and it goes beyond the Shia militia. It is at every level of the government, every level of the state, the security forces, the Kurds. I mean, they have relations with everybody in Iraq because they actually have a full-spectrum strategy for dealing with a close neighbor.

I would actually not pose Iran as the primary problem in Iraq. I think the militias are a primary problem. And Iran can use that instrument when it is useful for them, and if they decide that it is not useful for them, then they can begin to move to try and shut it down. And I think that the key point is going to be that it is impossible to have, as you said, it is impossible to have a strategy which is about keeping a unified state in Iraq that isn't going to include some kind of tacit, or formal, maybe not formal but at least tacit, cooperation with Iran. Their role in Iraq is simply too pervasive and too real. The security forces can't be disaggregated and only working with Sunni units.

And if you want to tamp down sectarianism, you can't then double down on a Sunni-Shia division of Iraq and try and only work with the Sunnis and fight against the Shiites. What you need to do is to try and bring that country back together, tamp down the sectarianism, and have a state based on citizenship. There has already been huge progress on a decentralization and the Constitution. You know, they are dealing with these issues of oil revenues and all these things, and no one is very happy with any of the solutions they have come up with, but they are working on them. I think that the idea of allowing the Kurds to go their own way, I think at this time is not a good one. I think that certainly we should continue to support the Pesh. We should continue to advocate Kurdish self-interest. But I think the Kurdish interests still are to be part of an Iraq in this decentralized federal framework. And that is why it is a good idea to funnel support, military support and other things, through Baghdad.

In other words, give them what they need, help them in the ways they need to be helped, but don't encourage the fragmentation of the state. And the key problem there, and I will finish, is that you talk about a three-state solution. And we have heard about this a quite a lot. There is a fairly plausible Shiite sub-state that you could imagine, and there is a very plausible Kurdish one. There is no plausible Sunni third state, other than the one ISIL has carved out. And that, I think, is not in an American interest to create. You need to keep the Sunni parts and the Shia parts together in something that we are calling Iraq. And so you are going to need to find some kind of bargain by which that state can coexist and can survive.

Ms. GABBARD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Dr. Heck.

Dr. HECK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for being here today. The President recently released his 2015 National Security Strategy. And on the White House Website, it states that the strategy is “the blueprint for America’s leadership in the world—how we address global challenges while advancing our Nation’s interests, values, and vision for the future.”

On page 3 of the strategy, it says, “We are leading a global campaign and degrading and ultimately defeating the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.”

And on page 15, it states, “We reject the lie that America and its allies are at war with Islam.”

I would disagree with the first statement. I don’t think we are leading in trying to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL, but I would agree with the second statement that we are not at war with all of Islam. We are at war with radical Islam and Islamic extremism, yet nowhere in the strategy does that term appear. In fact, the only two times that the word “Islam” appears in the strategy are in the two instances I just mentioned, yet climate change appears 19 times.

I would ask, Do you think the National Security Strategy has enough specificity to adequately inform the nested documents of the National Defense Strategy and the National Military Strategy to actually have a positive impact on executing a strategy for degrading and ultimately defeating ISIL?

And, secondly, Dr. Lynch, I would ask in your statement about the momentum of ISIL being halted. Just within the last 24 hours, they have taken control of the city of al-Baghdadi, and they are knocking on the door of the Al Asad Air Base, where we have 320 Marines in a training capacity. How can you say that the momentum has actually been halted?

Dr. LYNCH. In any civil war, those are excellent questions. And I really appreciate your opening comment about the, validating the idea that we are not at war with Islam is extremely important. And, you know, there has been a huge debate about whether we should use the term “Islamic extremism” or “violent Islam” or “extremist Islam” or those sorts of things. I actually fall in the school of thinking I don’t think it really matters that much what we call them. I think this is something that we concern ourselves with greatly, but whether we call them ISIL or Daesh or ISIS or Al Qaeda, I don’t think it matters very much. And I think that this notion that it would be interesting to talk about a bit more. But I think that forming a strategy is not dependent. I think it is semantics there. I really believe that.

In terms of momentum, I mean, I think if you look at these kinds of civil wars, there is constantly going to be a surge and a flow and you are going to see movements here, and a decline here, and a retreat there. We have been seeing this in Syria now for the last 2½, 3 years. It has basically been a strategic stalemate, and, you know, this village gets captured, this village gets lost. I think you can’t read too much into the daily pushes and flows. I think the defeat in Kobane, it was big, because this showed that they were not

unstoppable. They put a lot of resources and propaganda efforts into this and they failed. And I think that was big for blocking their momentum. I think that we have seen them pulling back from Aleppo. We have seen them trying to concentrate some of their forces. We have seen, you know, their failure to move into Erbil and into Baghdad. And so I wouldn't say, and here I would agree with you, there is no sign that we have reversed, that we are pushing them back, but we stopped their forward momentum and broke that patina of invincibility, which was extremely important I think, for the bandwagoning effect. Once they don't look invulnerable, that is when those tribes and other factions will start believing that it is safe to flip sides again. So I think that is how I would describe what is still obviously a very fluid situation.

General FLYNN. Yeah, so the National Security Strategy lays out the world, which is very complex array of threats. I don't believe that the National Security Strategy prioritizes what the United States should do about those threats. Prioritizing sort of the here and now and then sort of what like what a Harry Truman said post-World War II, which was, you know, I will quote him, you know, he rightly understood that the Soviets were a, quote, "Animated by a new fanatic faith," unquote. So we have to prioritize. We have to take this strategy, the National Security Strategy, and prioritize inside of it against the threats that we are facing. The fact that we even use ISIL and the word "Islamic" in the framework of Islamic State, it actually recognizes that, in fact, in that document, in the President's letter on top of that document, he uses Islamic State in the Levant. So it recognizes, so we in the United States are recognizing the fact that there is somebody called Islamic and there is somebody called a state inside of the Levant. So, again, we are struggling to define it as clearly as we possibly can. And it is a radical version of Islam. There is no doubt about it. And we can't not allow ourselves to define something that actually they are calling themselves in a sense. And so if the enemy is calling themselves that, why do we have such a difficult time? And the other thing, just as a real small minor thing, but the word or the acronym "Daesh," okay, that we throw around now, that actually recognizes, the latter part of that acronym it describes al-Sham. Al-Sham is the Levant. So it actually, to me, in my framework of really trying to understand who it is that we are facing, and I have studied these guys. I have dealt with them. I have talked to them. They, that actually benefits them. So, in a way, we are using an acronym to describe this enemy and I think it is because the Iraqis asked us to use it, but the acronym actually describes al-Sham, which says you basically are controlling the Levant, which is essentially what they want to do.

So we have to be very, very careful about the words that we use. When we use words like mujahideen, or jihad, those are recognitions of their courage instead of using a word like "mufsidun," which means you are a you know, that is about as an ugly a word as you can call an Arab. We don't use it. We should.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. Just two follow-ups. One on the notion that al-Baghdadi and ISIS is somehow doing better than Al Qaeda did in governance. There have been just as many stories out there,

like I said, Mosul is a disaster, and if I am wrong about that, please correct me, but from a governance standpoint. And there have been just as many stories of ISIL, you know, cutting people's hands off for smoking and alienating tribes. I don't really see any evidence that they are doing any better in terms of governing Muslims.

The one thing that they have going for them is the Baghdad government. Sunnis have no place else to go because, frankly, I haven't seen much improvement with al-Abadi. You know, Maliki was terrible, but the Sunnis still look at the Baghdad government as, you know, Shiite and basically sectarian. We have had, you know, massacres of Sunnis by Shia militia groups here recently. I mean, I think that has more to do with the fact that Sunnis are unable to break away from al-Baghdadi and ISIL than it does that they are governing better. Am I missing something? Is there some evidence that they are governing better, that they are not doing the same sort of violence against their citizens that Al Qaeda in Iraq did before, or are they, the Taliban did, for that matter?

Mr. BRANIFF. Ranking Member Smith, if I may, thank you for the question. I think the biggest difference is that they are governing. Even if they are governing poorly, most of the Al Qaeda and associated movement have never really tried to establish formal governance.

Mr. SMITH. It is a separate point. We are talking a little bit about what Al Qaeda in Iraq, Al Qaeda in Iraq did control territory before the Anbar Awakening, and they did run shadow governments. The Taliban did as well. So where they have governed was the comparison. And, in that sense, are they doing better than the Taliban did or some of these other Al Qaeda and Iraq folks did?

Mr. BRANIFF. Perhaps one metric would be the flow of foreign fighters into Iraq and Syria. Something about the way they are portraying their governance of Iraq and Syria is inspiring the largest number of foreign fighters to flow into the region. I think it is because they are, quote-unquote, living up to the righteous values that they espouse.

They are not compromising. They are seen as uncompromising. They are purifying Islam, these kinds of macho terms. And while it is horrific stuff, for the base, as Dr. Lynch mentioned, it is a rallying call and that they are calling Muslims to build the institutions of the caliphate to take part in this project of reestablishing a religious political empire. And that is empowering, even if the means by which they are governing is appalling. And it is seen as, for some, a more appealing alternative than like, as you mentioned, the Maliki government and Baghdad.

Mr. SMITH. Yeah, the Maliki alternative. And one final point on Guantanamo, the conversation back and forth about that. I would not take seriously any argument that says that we don't need to detain enemies. We do. The question is, do we need to detain them at Guantanamo? Nor would I argue with the point that, look, you are not going to close Guantanamo, and have, you know, the violent Islamic extremists go, Okay, we are good. I understand that. But it is not necessary, is it, to detain them at Guantanamo? I mean, the entire reason that Guantanamo was set up, was the belief that maybe we could somehow sidestep habeas corpus, but the

Supreme Court has shut that down. Is there any reason that we couldn't take these people, as we have in many instances, and detain them here in the United States?

General FLYNN. So we definitely need to be able to capture because if we only kill, that, to me, is a moral problem.

Mr. SMITH. I got that, but where?

General FLYNN. So you know, when you look at prior to 2003, there were many non-Afghans detained in Afghanistan. So, you know, I am not going to argue with you where, because I think we have to decide. We have to make that decision. But to be able to do tactical interrogation—

Mr. SMITH. I got all that. That wasn't my question.

General FLYNN [continuing]. Professionally, you can't, if we bring them into the United States and they get read their habeas corpus rights, that stops the process of being able to get the kind of information that you can get through very professionally done interrogations. I am telling you, I have seen it.

Mr. SMITH. I have got to tell you, I have heard that argument a thousand times.

General FLYNN. I have been involved in thousands of interrogation operations to be able to get to that point.

Mr. SMITH. You are telling me that every law enforcement personnel in the U.S., every FBI agent, gets no useful intelligence out of anybody they capture because once they Mirandize them, it is over and they can't get any information out of them?

General FLYNN. It is a lot slower. And I have been on both sides of it. Ranking Member, I have been on both sides of it. And it doesn't mean that we can't have professional law enforcement representatives involved in the process—

Mr. SMITH. Right.

General FLYNN [continuing]. From a detention interrogation process.

Mr. SMITH. Right. I disagree with you on the fact that somehow Miranda instantaneously shuts off the gathering of information. But putting that point aside, there is no reason, you know, as we have done with other people, you have to do that in Guantanamo, too. I mean, the same things apply in both places. So—

General FLYNN. True.

Mr. SMITH [continuing]. I guess the central question is, there is no reason that we couldn't do the same thing here in the U.S. that we do in Guantanamo. Guantanamo does not give us any particular interrogation or detention advantage.

General FLYNN. You just have to make sure, I mean, there is a timeliness issue, and you know, you have to make sure that the conditions are set for that. I mean, again, that is kind of a legislative to executive discussion about, if we bring them into the United States, what does that mean legally? I am not a lawyer. I don't know that. But I just know that there is probably going to be a different set of conditions when we bring them inside of the United States because we don't have designated combat zones anymore.

Mr. SMITH. You can bring them into—

General FLYNN. Wherever they go, we have to be able to capture these individuals to be able to get the intelligence out of them.

Mr. SMITH. There is no difference at this point between Guantanamo and the U.S.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Nugent.

Mr. NUGENT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

An interesting discussion about Guantanamo, and I absolutely—in my home area, we have the largest Federal prison ever. And I would just suggest to you, when you detain these folks, whether it is GTMO [Guantanamo] or in the U.S., that is the issue, that is going to be the issue to the bad guys and their associated friends and fellows. So I think it is, I agree with the general, when you bring them back to the U.S., as a former law enforcement, it just creates a whole bunch of other issues that we have not had to deal with when they are held at GTMO.

The one thing that I am struggling with was the President's request for an authorization, and you hit it on the head, General, is a clear, comprehensive strategy. And what would that look like? I guess that is where I am struggling. What does a clear, comprehensive strategy look like in regards to dealing with the issue that we have in front of us? Because, you know, we had the King of Jordan here. And his comprehensive strategy is, you can't just look at ISIS or ISIL. You have got to look at across the world in regards to Islamic extremism.

General FLYNN. So, I mean, we talked about this business about clearly defining the enemy and making sure that it is comprehensive. And I think that those are sort of two parts of this. And you have just addressed, certainly, the second one. I think the third one is that we have to really take a hard look at how we are organized as a nation to deal with the sort of the tactical problem of what is happening in Iraq and Syria. But we also have to look at how we are organized as a nation to deal with the wider longer-term problem of this radical version of Islam.

Now, that is, you know, specifically, it is the Department of Defense. It is the, you know, the Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the Intelligence Community as it supports our national interest. And then I think we have to look at how we are organized internationally. And I have really, you know, I use the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] model, you know, as a model, although it has got its, you know, shortcomings, but we need to have some sort of Arab-world NATO, if you will, like structure, and not deal with each one of these countries as though they are individual countries dealing with individual problems. They are all dealing with those kinds of problems. And I think that we do need to put somebody in charge of it. I think that we need to put, designate someone in charge that has not only the backing of this country and a full line of authority from the President of the United States to execute authorities, and it is probably civilian-led, but it is just somebody with that kind of, you know, gravitas, I guess, but also internationally accepted to run this sort of campaign.

Now, should it be somebody from the U.S.? I believe it should be somebody from the U.S. It doesn't need to be, doesn't mean that we have to have large numbers of boots on the ground. It just means that we have to come together, organize ourselves first,

make sure that we are organized correctly internationally, and then make sure that somebody is in charge of this effort, and then, frankly, tell the American public that this is going to last for generations. I mean, this is not something that is going to go away.

Mr. NUGENT. To the other panelists.

General FLYNN. And the AUMF is not that. It is only a component of it.

Mr. NUGENT. And that is, I think, the mistake that people think that the AUMF is the comprehensive strategy. It is just part of the toolkit in regards to it.

The other panelists, in regards to a comprehensive strategy, do you think today, today, at this point in time, that we have a comprehensive strategy? Today.

Mr. Lynch.

Dr. LYNCH. No, I don't. I think that we have—we did a very good job, I think, of assembling a coalition and stopping the immediate crisis. And now is the time when we need to formulate that long-term strategy. I think your question is exactly right. In terms of your specific question about what that strategy might look like, I mean, I could repeat the things I said before about preventing a clash of civilization and all that.

Mr. NUGENT. I appreciate that.

Dr. LYNCH. I don't need to say all of that, but I really want to emphasize and second and third something that General Flynn said that you—if we are going to have any success in dealing with ISIL and with extremism in the Middle East, we have to make sure that our allies are on the same page as we are, because they have been as much the problem as the solution.

Mr. NUGENT. Absolutely.

Dr. LYNCH. Extraordinarily destructive in Syria and abusive of human rights. So a comprehensive strategy, I think, has to have that component of political reforms and everything else, or else it is just spitting into the wind.

Mr. NUGENT. Mr. Braniff.

Mr. BRANIFF. I think, thus far, we have been dealing with issues in an ad hoc basis, and perhaps that is because of the instability associated with the Arab Spring. And, frankly, it was a pretty tumultuous few years. I think any strategy has to recognize that Al Qaeda and ISIL have—

Mr. NUGENT. We don't have a comprehensive strategy though today. Do you believe—

Mr. BRANIFF. No, I think Al Qaeda and ISIL have pulled us into the realm of nonstate actors where we are largely forced to operate in extrajudicial terms and outside of the international system where the rules of the game are set up in our favor, and we should try to push this back into the international system where, again, we have those rules working for our favor.

Mr. NUGENT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Mr. Langevin.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank all of our witnesses for being here, in particular General Flynn, a fellow Rhode Islander.

General, welcome back before the committee and thank you for your years of service.

So I would like to, my question would be for Dr. Lynch, and also for General Flynn, whoever wants to go first. Clearly, this rise of radical violent extremists didn't happen overnight. It was allowed to fester in many ways. Maybe it was the religious community, for whatever reason, as I understand it, was allowed to preach hate and violence, and a lot of the leaders in the Middle East kind of looked the other way and for whatever reason. So it kind of took a long time to get here. It is going to take a long time to get out of it. But let me ask you, do the statements from, for example, President el-Sisi, in Egypt, which I found surprising, but welcome, a welcome statement when he spoke to the religious community there or establishing Sunni imams in the greater Middle East who have denounced the violence of ISIL or Islamic extremism more broadly, do they moderate, or you know, counter the nature of the grievances, and the threat from jihadists in the region? Or are these steps having the reverse effect of reinforcing the jihadist ideology and grievance narrative? Can you comment on that?

Dr. LYNCH. I think it is a fantastic question. Thank you. I think that the issue with statements like those by General el-Sisi, or President el-Sisi, is not the statement itself. It is that he doesn't really have the standing to issue those things because when he is presiding over a fairly repressive police state and putting tens of thousands of political dissidents in jail, it is very difficult for him to then say, Oh, but you must be moderate and you must participate in the political system. And so it gets back exactly to the conversation we were having a moment ago about the need to understand that if you want to have leaders who are capable of making—leaders in the Middle East who are capable of making the kinds of statements that you and I would very much like to see, they need to have the standing from which to do so. And right now they don't. The Saudis have been in a very difficult position on this. The Egyptians have been in a very difficult position. And so the traditional leaders of the Arab world are not in a very strong position right now to make the kinds of moves for moderation and against extremism that we need to see.

General FLYNN. So, real quickly, this was, this shift in the strengthening of this ideology started well before 9/11; 9/11 just brought it to the fore. I mean, it really was, you know, it just showed how dedicated and how long term their vision is of what it is that they believe. And I believe that President el-Sisi's remarks back in the late December-January timeframe, he was talking to the Egyptian people as much as he was talking to the Arab world. And we should not lose sight of that. So, despite the challenges that Egypt faces internally to try to get back to a sense of stability and security, we need leaders like that, frankly, more of them around the Arab world that are willing to step up and say the kinds of things that he said that took a lot of courage. But he also knows, he also knows that he has to change inside of their own system, just in Egypt alone, to be able to get the people to sort of come back around to be more moderate. And they are dealing with some very, they are dealing with Al Qaeda, and they are dealing with elements of radical, you know, version of the Muslim

Brotherhood in that country. So I was very heartened when I heard President el-Sisi come out and make those remarks.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Yeah, so are there things that we can focus on in our strategy to help encourage that kind of moderation? But let me ask you also, given that there are certain actors in the region, such as UAE [United Arab Emirates] and Jordan, among others, who appear to be supporting U.S. interests, how should the United States support and organize these partners in the region to serve as potentially moderating influences within the greater Middle East?

Mr. BRANIFF. Thank you, Congressman.

So I think one thing we can do, we know that the U.S. Government is gun-shy to talk about what is moderate Islam, and what should Islam be and other leaders in the Muslim world don't always have the credibility to talk about moderating Islam and have actually that carry authority. But one thing that leaders can do is try to collectively decrease the perceived social legitimacy of violence, which is not talking about what kind of Islam is right or wrong, but it is lowering that threshold that sparks sort of revulsion against terrorist organizations so that they step over that line more quickly. And this is something that I think we can do collectively.

General FLYNN. Let me add one other comment, and that has to do with the rule of law. And I think that is probably a strategic advantage that this country has. If there is one thing that we need to export around the world, not so much democracy, but the idea of rule of law, so people are governed by norms and behaviors that are acceptable internationally. And I think that that is a problem in this part of the world right now.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you all.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. As you all know, they have called votes. I think we will have time probably to get two more folks in.

Mr. Cook.

Mr. COOK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Flynn, first of all, I notice you went to University of Rhode Island.

General FLYNN. First land-grant university in the country, established by—Abraham Lincoln actually established that law.

Mr. COOK. I know, but my daughter went there and my son-in-law. I just want to know why the out-of-state tuition is so high.

General FLYNN. I defer to my colleague.

Mr. COOK. Going back to Dr. Heck's question about the airfield, which is in the news right now, and everything else. And I think a lot of us are wondering whether this is a symbolic thing in terms of a targeting in terms of mortars and indirect fire weapons because of the fact that there are marines there, a chance to embarrass the Marines. As you know, Fallujah I think was a major, major political propaganda victory for them because of the number of soldiers, sailors, and marines that were killed in that city. And I am trying to see if you had a take on whether psychologically, that would be a huge victory if, you know, they had tremendous casualties or what have you. And that is the number one press story, I think. Can you comment on that?

And secondly, I want you to address our lack of human intelligence. I know you talked about feedback from prisoners, but thank you.

General FLYNN. Yeah. So the fact that this tactical action by ISIS is going on right now in, essentially, the village or town of Baghdadi, is a strategic victory for them. It is definitely a strategic information victory for them. And they are very close in to Al Asad, and there has been, you know, I have been to Al Asad a number of times. We operated out of there very effectively.

If I were those marines in there, I would, you know, be looking to make sure that we are absolutely within, that we have the rules of engagement very clearly understood to be able to deal with anything that happens against those perimeters of that particular base. What I would love to see? I would love to see an unleashing of some Iraqi force with the support of our U.S. Marines to go after and retake that little village because that would be doable. And it would be something that the Iraqis could actually do with the support of our U.S. Marine forces that are in Al Asad.

In terms of HUMINT, we lack the kind of HUMINT, human intelligence, that we need, that we used to have actually pretty, you know, we developed it over time, but we don't have that kind of level that we need today. And interrogations is actually a part of that.

Mr. COOK. Since I have still got 2 minutes, I just wanted, you talked about the plans and everything like that. I used to be a plans officer 100 years ago, and we are talking about the budget and everything else. And one of my big arguments is the tempo of ops compared with, is just out of control. You know, you have got to do this, this, this, and this. We used to have a vault with all of the op plans in it and everything else. And I am wondering, are we out of control because we have a brigade for this; we have a squadron for this, we just don't have enough military forces to go around for all of the commitments. And if you could briefly comment on that.

General FLYNN. Right. We do not. We do not have, for the, if you look at the menu that the National Security Strategy currently is in terms of the layout of threats around the world, and particularly this problem that we are facing right now, our military is so stretched thin and, frankly, underresourced, and parts of it are not trained to the level that we would expect them to be, that the American public would expect them to be at. And this sequestration, and you all know this, is just choking the readiness of the United States military. And we need to decide what kind of military do we want to have given the threats that we face? And right now it has grown. It has gotten too small, and if we continue down this path, it is going to get even smaller, and that is a danger to our national security. So—

Mr. COOK. Thank you for your service.

I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Scott.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for being here. I will try to be brief.

And, Dr. Lynch, I want to go to one of the statements that you made about the fact that terrorism is ebbing and flowing. We

shouldn't pay too much attention to it. That is just going to happen the way the Middle East is, if you will. But I would like to have this submitted for the record and wonder if you have seen this.

[The information referred to is retained in committee files and can be viewed upon request.]

Mr. SCOTT. This is the DIA Intelligence Assessment from 2004 to 2014. In 2004, we were dealing with 21 total terrorist groups in 18 total countries. And today we are dealing with 41 terrorist groups in 24 countries. I certainly respect your opinion and agree with it on many things, but I would suggest that that is more than an ebb and flow. That is a significant growth and an ideology that is dangerous to the world.

What would you assess the population of the Islamic extremists or terrorist—whatever we want to call them—in Iraq to be, the total number of them?

Dr. LYNCH. I thank you, Congressman. I want to clarify. When I was talking about ebb and flow, I was talking about civil war dynamics and not terrorism. I was talking about the battle, the fighting on the ground in Syria, specifically. So I am sorry for that confusion.

Mr. SCOTT. And, for the record, you know, the U.S. working to undermine Assad and move him out, I have read some of your statements on—I personally think the U.S. made a mistake. And when we undermine those leaders in those countries, we end up creating a vacuum that allows these extremist groups to expand. But I have read some of your statements there. But the total number for Iraq, if you would?

Dr. LYNCH. Right. I just wanted to clarify that because the ebb and flow is really about the civil wars. And the question of whether we should have gone after Assad is a question for another day.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix on page 79.]

Dr. LYNCH. I would say that, you know, if you go country by country, you get wildly different estimates. So, for example, there is an Islamic State affiliate supposedly in Algeria, which might have 20 people in it.

Mr. SCOTT. If I can, but look—

Dr. LYNCH. So, in Iraq, what I would say is—that was your specific question?

Mr. SCOTT. Sure.

Dr. LYNCH. You might have something along the lines of—what would you say, Bill—you know, maybe 5,000 dedicated ISIS or ISIL fighters combined with a whole set of local forces who have aligned with them.

Mr. SCOTT. Let's use that number. I am trying to move fast because I want to give my colleague the opportunity to ask her questions as well. How many fighting-age men are in that country?

Dr. LYNCH. Good question. Seventeen million, maybe. Fifteen million.

Mr. SCOTT. Let's first—okay. I will use whatever number.

Dr. LYNCH. But those are Kurds, Sunnis, and Shiites, and therefore, so if you are talking only about the Sunni community—

Mr. SCOTT. Here is my point, and this is what I want to come at you on, General, if there are 5,000 Islamic extremist terrorists,

whatever we want to call them, inside a country that has 5 million fighting-age men, no matter what battle we win, if we get the rules of engagement right, they have got—if they are moderates—that is a 50,000-to-1 margin. And if 50,000 to 1 isn't enough of an advantage, then what is? So this is where—this is why so many people in our part of the world identify this as Islam because, clearly, 50,000 could overrun 1 if they wanted to.

So, General Flynn, my question for you specifically, if we get the rules of engagement right—which I certainly don't trust the President on—but if we get the rules of engagement right, there is no doubt in my mind that we can win any battle over there. But if they in Iraq have a 50,000-to-1 margin versus the Islamic terrorists and they can't control that, what good can we do?

General FLYNN. Yeah, so I was asked a question back in 2002, when I was first in Afghanistan, and I was asked how many enemy are we facing in Afghanistan at that time, 2002? This was in April-May timeframe 2002. And I said, we are looking at about 35,000. So the next question was, Okay, so if we kill or capture all 35,000, can we go home? Do we win? And the next part of that answer was, no, because there is another half a million on the other side of the border in this place called the FATA [Federally Administered Tribal Areas]. So it is the same sort of analogy today. We can capture and kill all day long, but until we deal with, you know, these others that are there, these other millions or whatever that number is, we are going to be at this a long time. And that is why the military component of this makes us feel good when we do something, we kill somebody; we get a leader. But it is all the others that are there, you know, ready to join this movement and fight against our value system, and that is just something that we are going to have to—that is the wider strategy that we need.

Mr. SCOTT. And that is why I think training and equipping and supporting our allies becomes the most important part of this strategy.

General FLYNN. Exactly, across the region, across the region.

Mr. SCOTT. Absolutely.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. McSally, I think we have got time for a couple of questions if you would like to go ahead.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you all for your testimony. It has been very informative. A lot of my questions have been answered.

A quick question about trends in Africa. I was a part of a team at U.S. Africa Command running current operations there. And just your comments, we talked a little bit about Boko Haram, but AQAM [Al Qaeda and associated movements] and Al Shabaab, and the trends you are seeing with those organizations, and you know, there are plenty of ungoverned spaces that are potential—we have seen foreign fighters flow in and out in the past when many people weren't paying attention. So any comments on the trends going on in the rest of those organizations on the African Continent?

Dr. LYNCH. Well, I would—I will defer to Bill on a lot of the details. The one I will talk about is Libya and the effect that that is having. I think that you are seeing the emergence of what looks like an Islamic State affiliate in Libya. It is a completely ungoverned space, and it is now a civil war, total polarization. And

that is having destabilizing effects on both east and west. The Egyptians are extremely worried about it. Tunisians are very, very worried about it. And so, you know, basically, the lesson is you get the collapse of the state, and it opens the space for these groups. And so I am very worried about Libya for all kinds of reasons, but that is one of them.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thanks.

General FLYNN. Briefly, because I know Bill has something to offer on this as well.

The negative is that it is rapidly growing. Okay, so it is getting worse, particularly those couple of areas that you just talked about. And the other part is, as Marc just highlighted, the breakdown of the nation-state, or the order of the nation-state, if you will, in parts of that region.

The positive is that there are countries that understand it and are trying to come to grips with it, and that is more down in the—you know, I mean, there is a number of them. These seven, I think it is seven countries that are trying to work against Boko Haram right now that have come together. There are some economies there, particularly down in the central and southern part of Africa that are good models for the rest of Africa, but the size of the population in the 15- to 30-year-old category of young men that have nothing better to do than to join these groups is probably the fastest growing population demographic on the planet today.

Ms. MCSALLY. Exactly. Great, thank you.

And I yield back. I know we have got to go vote. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for your time.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentlelady, and thank you all for being here. As many topics as we got to today, we didn't get to everything.

I am sorry, Mr. Braniff, did you have something you wanted to add on that last point?

Mr. BRANIFF. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for the question. Al Shabaab conducted twice as many attacks in the first 9 months of 2014 as they did in all of 2013. Boko Haram will likely be either the most or the second most lethal terrorist organization in 2014 when we finalize our data—although they are not the most active in terms of number of attacks, which means that they are, unfortunately, quite efficient in creating fatalities per attack. And, of course, we just saw their first attack in Chad a day or so ago and continued attacks in now Cameroon. And there is another group in Nigeria that is of among the 10 most active groups of 2014, a group called the Fulani—associated with the Fulan tribes. And so what we are seeing is increased levels of terrorist attacks and fatalities, both in West Africa and in East Africa, associated with Shabaab and a lot of fluidity in North Africa.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. And I think it is helpful to have some objective measurements to gauge these things. They don't tell us the whole story, but they do enable us to compare, to compare trends.

The other topic we didn't really get to today which I think we need to understand better is this competition among groups. You

alluded to it. We didn't quite have a chance to get to it, but I think that is a very significant factor that we have not fully explored.

But we did get to a number of things. Again, I apologize. We are getting cut short a little bit because of votes, but I very much appreciate each of you being here and assisting the committee.

And, with that, the hearing stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 10:58 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

FEBRUARY 13, 2015

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

FEBRUARY 13, 2015

STATEMENT OF LTG, USA (RET) MICHAEL FLYNN
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2015

“What is the state of Islamic extremism: Key Trends, Challenges, and Implications for US Policy?”

Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, members of the committee, it is an honor to be here today.

Thank you for inviting me.

You have asked me to comment on the state of Islamic extremism.

Today, I have the unhappy task of informing you that according to every metric of significance, Islamic extremism has grown over the last year. Whether it be:

- The scale and scope of ISIS and its associated movements,
- The number of violent Islamist groups,
- The territory which these groups control,
- The number of terrorist attacks these groups perpetrate,
- The massive numbers and suffering of refugees and displaced persons due to these Islamist groups,
- The amount of kidnapping and rape of women and children by these Islamist groups,
- The numbers of casualties they inflict,
- Their broad expansion and use of the internet, or,
- Just their sheer barbarism that we’ve witnessed

I can draw no other conclusion than to say that the threat of Islamic extremism has reached an unacceptable level and that it is growing.

We are at war with violent and extreme Islamists (both Sunni and Shia) and we must accept and face this reality.

This enemy has an ingrained and unshakable vision of how the world and society should be ordered and they believe violence is a legitimate means of bringing about this ideal state.

The *violent Islamist* is serious, devout, committed and dangerous. His ideology justifies the most heinous, inhumane actions imaginable and he will not be reasoned with nor will he relent.

This enemy must be opposed. They must be killed. They must be destroyed and the associated extremist form of the Islamic ideology must be defeated wherever it rears its ugly head.

There are some who counsel patience, arguing violent Islamists are not an existential threat and therefore can simply be managed as criminals. I respectfully and strongly disagree. I

STATEMENT OF LTG, USA (RET) MICHAEL FLYNN
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2015

have been in the theaters of war of Iraq and Afghanistan for many years, faced this enemy up close and personal, and I have seen first hand the unrestrained cruelty of our enemy.

They may be animated by a medieval ideology, but they are thoroughly modern in their capacity to kill and maim as well as precisely and very smartly message their ideas, intentions and actions via the internet.

In fact, they are increasingly capable of threatening our Nation's interests and those of our Allies.

Furthermore, it would be foolish for us to wait until our enemies pose an existential threat before taking decisive action. Doing so would only increase the cost in blood and treasure *later* for what we know must be done *now*.

Our violent and extremely radical Islamist enemies must be stopped. To that end, I offer the following three strategic objectives:

First, we have to energize every element of National Power—similar to the effort during WWII or during the Cold War—to effectively resource what will likely be a multi-generational struggle. There is no cheap way to win this fight.

Second, we must engage the violent Islamists wherever they are, drive them from their safe havens and kill them. There can be no quarter and no accommodation. Any nation-state that offers safe haven to our enemies must be given one choice—to eliminate them or be prepared for those contributing partners involved in this endeavor to do so.

We do need to recognize there are nations who lack the capability to defeat this threat and will likely require help to do so inside of their own internationally recognized boundaries. We must be prepared to assist those nations.

Third, we must decisively confront the state and non-state supporters and enablers of the *violent Islamist* ideology and compel them to end their support to our enemies or be prepared to remove their capacity to do so. Many of these are currently considered “partners” of the United States.

This must change. If our so-called partners do not act in accordance with internationally accepted norms and behaviors or international law, the United States must be prepared to cut off or severely curtail economic, military and diplomatic ties.

We cannot be seen as being hypocritical to those we are partnering with to defeat radical Islam.

STATEMENT OF LTG, USA (RET) MICHAEL FLYNN

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2015

Finally, in pursuit of these objectives, I fully support Congress' constitutional role in providing an Authorization for the Use of Military Force. This authorization should be broad and agile—but unconstrained by unnecessary restrictions, restrictions that today cause not only frustration in our military, intelligence and diplomatic communities, but also significantly slow down the decision making process for numerous fleeting opportunities.

It is important, however, to realize that such an authorization is neither a comprehensive strategy nor a war winning one.

If there is not a clear, coherent and comprehensive strategy forthcoming from the administration, there should be no authorization.

With that, I'm happy to take your questions.

Lieutenant General Michael T. Flynn, USA

Director, Defense Intelligence Agency

Michael T. Flynn graduated from the University of Rhode Island in 1981 and was commissioned a second lieutenant in Military Intelligence. His first assignment was as a paratrooper of the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Since then, he has served in a variety of command and staff positions to include, Commander, 313th Military Intelligence Battalion and G2, 82nd Airborne Division; G2, 18th Airborne Corps, CJ2, CJTF-180 Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan; Commander, 111th Military Intelligence Brigade at the Army's Intelligence Center at Fort Huachuca, Arizona; Director of Intelligence, Joint Special Operations Command with duty in OEF and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF); Director of Intelligence, United States Central Command with duty in OEF and OIF; Director of Intelligence, the Joint Staff; Director of Intelligence, International Security Assistance Force-Afghanistan and US Forces-Afghanistan and Special Assistant to the Deputy Chief of Staff, G2. He most recently served as the Assistant Director of National Intelligence for Partner Engagement before becoming the 18th Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency on 24 July 2012.



Lieutenant General Flynn's other assignments include multiple tours at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where he deployed with the 82nd Airborne Division as a platoon leader for Operation URGENT FURY in Grenada, and as Chief of Joint War Plans for JTF-180 UPHOLD DEMOCRACY in Haiti. He also served with the 25th Infantry Division at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, and as the Senior Observer/Controller for Intelligence at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

Lieutenant General Flynn holds an undergraduate degree in Management Science from the University of Rhode Island and holds three graduate degrees: a Master of Business Administration in Telecommunications from Golden Gate University, San Francisco; a Master of Military Arts and Sciences from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; and a Master of National Security and Strategic Studies from the United States Naval War College. He also holds an Honorary Doctorate of Laws from The Institute of World Politics, Washington, D.C.

Lieutenant General Flynn is a graduate of the Army's Intelligence Officer Basic, Advanced, and Electronic Warfare Courses; the Combined Armed Services Staff Course; the United States Army Command and General Staff College and School of Advanced Military Studies; and the United States Naval War College.

His awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal (with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters), Legion of Merit (with Oak Leaf Cluster), Bronze Star Medal (with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters), Meritorious Service Medal (with Silver Oak Leaf Cluster), Joint Service Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal (with 4 Oak Leaf Clusters), the NATO Service Medal, and several service and campaign ribbons. Lieutenant General Flynn also has earned the Ranger Tab and Master Parachutist Badge, and the Joint Staff Identification Badge.

Lieutenant General Flynn is happily married and has two sons.

**DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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Witness name: Michael T. Flynn

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

Individual

Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented: _____

Federal Contract or Grant Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) or grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

2015

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
NA	NA	NA	NA

2014

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
NA	NA	NA	NA

2013

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
NA	NA	NA	NA

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2015

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment
NA	NA	NA	NA

2014

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment
NA	NA	NA	NA

2013

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment
NA	NA	NA	NA



**House Armed Services Committee Hearing
“What is the State of Islamic Extremism: Key Trends,
Challenges and Implications for U.S. Policy”**

Testimony of William Braniff
Executive Director
National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START)
University of Maryland
13 February 2015



Chairman Thornberry, Ranking Member Smith, and esteemed members of the committee, I would like to thank you on behalf of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, known as START,¹ for inviting us to speak with you today. I've been asked to reflect on the state of Islamic Extremism, one year and one week after testifying before this same body on nearly the same topic. In the intervening 53 weeks, we have seen the dramatic rise of an erstwhile al-Qa'ida affiliate, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), declare a Caliphate and eclipse al-Qa'ida and its associated movement (AQAM) on the world stage. The trend lines are alarming; we are seeing considerable year-on-year increases in both the number of terrorist attacks and fatalities due to terrorism. Furthermore, theoretical work and empirical work in the terrorism studies field suggests that competition among terrorist groups, or outbidding, is one of the most important predictors of increased group lethality over time.^{2,3} In this testimony, therefore, I will provide an update on global terrorism trends, and will focus on the implications of the current competition between AQAM and ISIL.

¹ START is based at the University of Maryland and supported in part by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate Office of University Programs through a Center of Excellence grant. START uses state-of-the-art theories, methods and data from the social and behavioral sciences to improve understanding of the origins, dynamics and social and psychological impacts of terrorism. This testimony reflects the opinions of the author, and not those of the Department of Homeland Security or any other office of the United States Government that has funded START research.

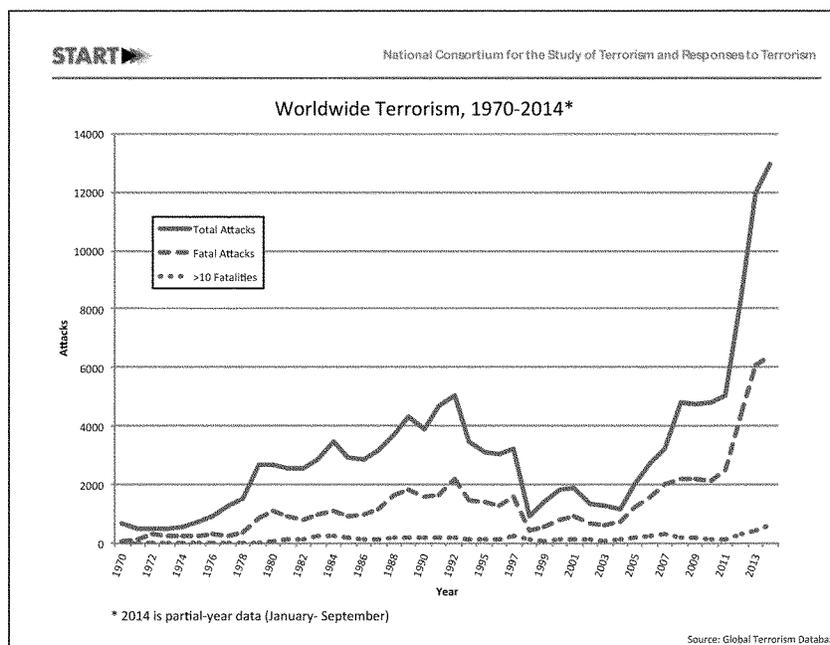
² For a theoretical discussion of outbidding, in which groups demonstrate their resolve through greater levels of violence in order to win support, see: Kydd, Andrew H., and Barbara F. Walter. "The Strategies of Terrorism." *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 49-80.

³ For empirical work examining the impacts of rivalries and collaboration, among other factors, on terrorist group dynamics, see: Asal, Victor, and R. Karl Rethemeyer. 2008. "The Nature of the Beast: Terrorist Organizational Characteristics and Organizational Lethality." *Journal of Politics*, 70(2): 437-449. and; Asal, Victor, Gary Ackerman, and R. Karl Rethemeyer. 2012. Connections Can Be Toxic: Terrorist Organizational Factors and the Pursuit of CBRN Weapons *Studies in Terrorism and Conflict* 35:229-254.

START NATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR THE STUDY OF TERRORISM AND RESPONSES TO TERRORISM

Data

In 2013, the most recent year for which START has released a complete set of global terrorism data, nearly 8500 terrorist attacks killed over 22,000 people.⁴



⁴ START defines an act of terrorism as follows in the Global Terrorism Database: “the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation.”

Given the varying definitions of terrorism and to provide flexibility for those who use GTD for different analytical and operational purposes, an incident must meet five of six criteria to be included in the GTD. Specifically, START includes incidents that meet three mandatory criteria (the act was intentional, the act involved the use or threat of violence, and the perpetrator(s) of the act was a sub-national actor) and then two of the three following additional criteria:

1. The violent act was aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal;
2. The violent act included evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) other than the immediate victims; and
3. The violent act was outside the precepts of International Humanitarian Law insofar as it targeted non-combatants.

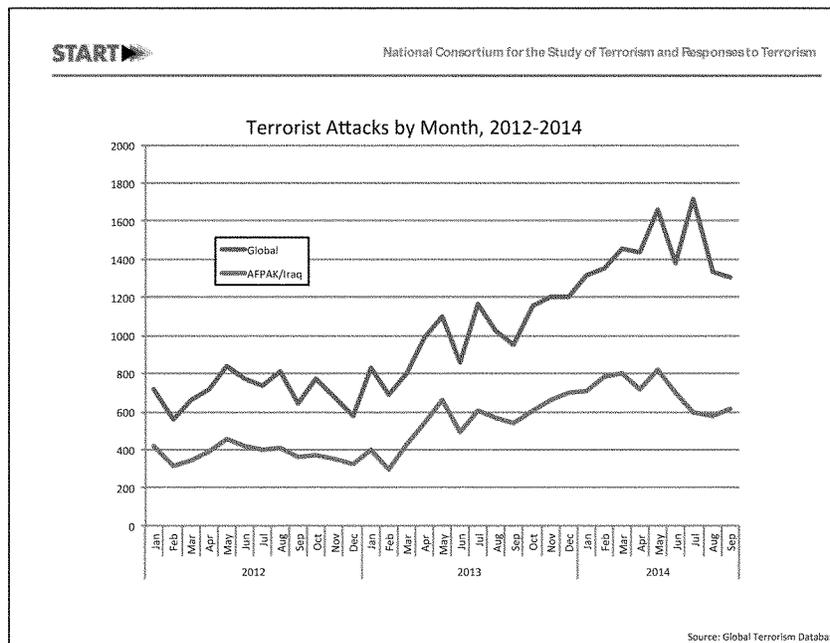


Preliminary data for the first nine months of 2014 overtake those numbers handedly; between January 1st and September 30th nearly 13,000 terrorist attacks killed more than 31,000 people. When START releases the full Global Terrorism Database (GTD) dataset for 2014, we anticipate it will include over 15,000 terrorist attacks, a vast increase from 2013, which was already the most lethal and active year for global terrorism in the dataset, which dates back to 1970.^{5,6}

The geographic distribution of terrorist attacks and fatalities is not uniform, nor are all terrorist groups equally responsible for terrorist violence. Instead, only a handful of countries suffer a plurality of global attacks, and a handful of groups bear an overwhelming responsibility for attacks and fatalities.

⁵ It is critical to note that beginning with 2012 data collection, START made several [important changes to the GTD collection methodology](#), improving the efficiency and comprehensiveness of the process. As a result of these improvements, a direct comparison between 2011 and 2012 likely overstates the increase in total attacks and fatalities worldwide during this time period. However, analysis of the data indicates that this increase began before the shift in data collection methodology and has continued after the shift in the data collection methodology. The alarming spike in terrorist activity and lethality over the last several years is a real phenomenon, even when accounting for the possibility of methodological artifacts

⁶ I am indebted to Erin Miller, Michael Jensen and the entire Global Terrorism Database team, as well as primary investigators Gary LaFree and Laura Dugan (University of Maryland) for the rigor and objectivity undergirding this terrorism incident data.

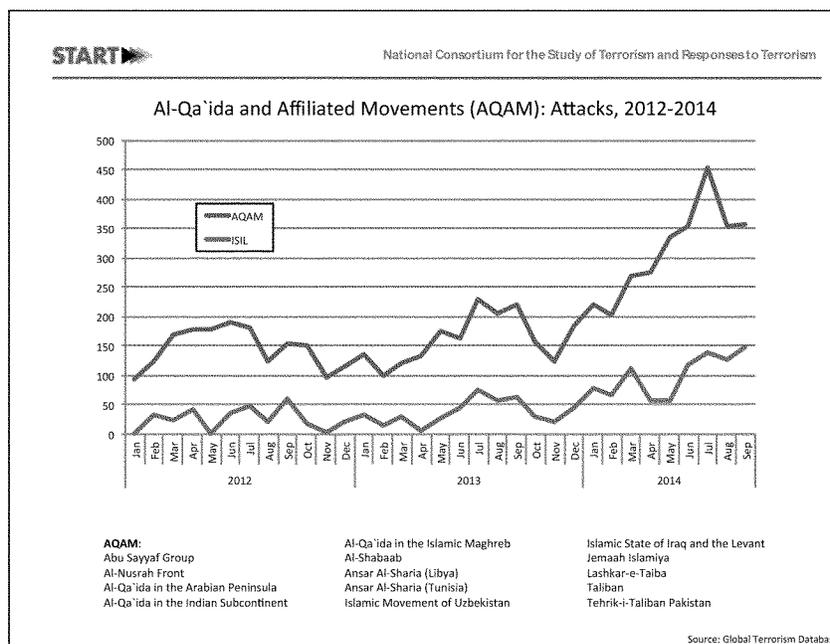


Approximately 50% of the terrorist attacks and 47% of fatalities in the first nine months of 2014 occurred in just three countries – Iraq (approx. 3200 attacks/8950 fatalities), Pakistan (approx. 1705 attacks, 1690 fatalities), and Afghanistan (approx. 1410 attacks/4300 fatalities). Aside from the immediate human costs, terrorist violence is polarizing and often forces individuals to “pick a side.” In countries where terrorism crowds out nonviolent activism, civilians often have little choice but to align with extremist organizations out of concerns for self-preservation. This is one mechanism in which extremist ideologies and groups can gain sway over larger swathes of society.

Based on data from the last several years, it is clear that groups generally associated with al-Qa’ida remain the most lethal groups in the world, and it is their violence that has driven global increases in activity and lethality. According to preliminary data from the first nine months of 2014, seven of the ten most lethal terrorist groups include ISIL, Boko Haram, the Taliban, al-Shabaab, al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula, Tehriki-Taliban Pakistan, and Jabhat al-Nusra.

START NATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR THE
STUDY OF TERRORISM AND RESPONSES TO TERRORISM

Given this reality, it is even more alarming to note that ISIL conducted more attacks than any other terrorist group, including all other groups associated with AQAM in the first nine months of 2014. If we count ISIL attacks among a representation of AQAM attacks by month, and then present ISIL attacks alone on the same graph, we see the oversized contribution that ISIL has made to the violent output from these various violent jihadist organizations.⁷ It is therefore essential to understand the implications of the ideological, operational, and strategic differences that manifest in this greater level of terrorist violence.



⁷ The connection between Boko Haram and al-Qa`ida is not well established in open source literature. While Boko Haram espouses similar justifications for their use of terrorist violence, we have erred on the side of caution in this analysis and excluded them from AQAM. Including Boko Haram would not change the general argument made here: that ISIL was responsible for approximately one-third of terrorist attacks attributed to AQAM in the first nine months of 2014. Due to the high number of fatalities associated with Boko Haram attacks, however, their inclusion would lower the percentage of fatalities attributed to ISIL within AQAM.

Analysis⁸

Given the rise of ISIL and the potential for competition between it and AQAM, I would like to compare and contrast their respective vision for the Caliphate, their operations, and their strategy. I argue that ISIL and AQAM are not merely two sides of the same coin. The differences between them have significant implications for the Muslim world and for U.S. policy.

Vision for the Caliphate

For al-Qa'ida senior leadership, "the Caliphate" is a master-frame that it dangles well out in front of violent Islamist groups the world-over, hoping to align their otherwise dispersed and diverse violent campaigns on azimuths that converge in the triumphant, albeit distant, future. The Caliphate is a conceptual destination; a grandiose victory that signals the onset of global conquest in which all of the world's territories will be governed by al-Qa'ida's interpretation of Islam.

For ISIL, by comparison, it is the reality of an extant Caliphate and its associated obligations that will purify Islam, rally dispersed actors to make the *hijra*, and ready Muslims for the apocalyptic military battle with the West in the Levant. The Caliphate's growth in size and strength is seen as the means to the end of a final decisive military confrontation with the West. Where al-Qa'ida and its associated movement summons fighters to active jihadist fronts, Caliph Ibrahim called upon doctors, jurists and engineers to build the institutions of the Caliphate. Primed by the online discourse of the last ten years, aided by person-to-person social media interactions and inspired by ISIL's advances on the ground, foreign fighters have flowed into Iraq and Syria at an alarming rate.

Part of ISIL's appeal to foreign fighters is its physical control of territory in the Levant, its aura of invincibility stemming from its successful summer military

⁸ The author is indebted to Ryan Pereira, who greatly informed this comparative analysis of al-Qa'ida and ISIL for a recently released Department of Defense white paper, "Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL," December 2014, Strategic Level Assessment Periodic Publication, available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bz3bazi00zAEdC1ES1gtTW5iNE0/view>.

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offensive in Iraq, and the doctrine of “remaining and expanding.” It is in this context that policymakers should view local insurgent groups’ pledges of *baya’t* to the Caliphate. In accepting the jihadists’ pledges of allegiance and expanding the Caliphate’s *wilayats* to the Sinai and North Africa, and most recently to Afghanistan-Pakistan, ISIL is cementing its successes in the eyes of its sympathizers. To these supporters, the Caliphate is not a static institution. It is predestined to expand and attain global domination. While the Caliphate aspires to global domination, its leadership is motivated by a worldview informed by the Prophet Muhammad’s military successes against his tribal enemies. Just as the Prophet was able to overcome military defeats and survive assassination attempts, so too, will the Caliphate continue its global expansion in the light of the U.S.-led coalition’s campaign against ISIL.

Operations

Al-Qa’ida’s kinetic operations target the “far enemy,” the West, above all other targets. Viewing their organization as the vanguard of the jihadist movement, al-Qa’ida seeks to use spectacular, mass-casualty terrorist attacks to incite a heavy-handed military response from Western governments. These state responses would seemingly evidence the War on Islam that al-Qa’ida portrays in its propaganda, thereby polarizing the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds and enabling the jihadists to mobilize resources for a civilizational conflict. Al-Qa’ida strategist, Abu Bakr Naji, famously referred to this process as “awakening the masses.” For al-Qa’ida’s provocation to be effective, foreign governments must play their scripted roles in this cycle of violence, hence al-Qa’ida’s preference for sensational attacks that are politically difficult for Western nation-states to ignore.

Before, during and after the Sunni awakening in Iraq, al-Qa’ida senior leadership discouraged Abu Musab al-Zarqawi’s internecine violence in favor of attacks against the occupying forces. In recent years and in various countries, amorphous front groups with names like Ansar al-Sharia have worked alongside of other Sunni jihadists and insurgents, many with divergent ideological orientations. These front

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organizations are designed to provide basic social services to local populations and to engage in da'wa, the promulgation of their religious ideology. For al-Qa'ida, it is not yet time to purify Islam by force.

By contrast, ISIL has thus far opted to deter full-scale Western intervention in Iraq and Syria while engaging in aggressive internecine violence to purge local challengers. When President Obama deployed U.S. military advisors to Iraq, ISIL threatened that #CalamityWillBefallUS via Twitter should the U.S. escalate its involvement in the fight. In response to U.S. airstrikes, ISIL released videos of the murders of journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff. While limited intervention may serve to bolster the legitimacy and recruitment efforts of ISIL, as it can weather such a storm, baiting a large-scale intervention is not yet in their best interests.

Instead of the far enemy, ISIL's military operations have focused on attacking competitors in their midst who do not submit to their ideological and organizational primacy, and seizing the resources necessary to build the institutions of the Caliphate. Operations are not only used to seize important border crossings, dams, and oil fields or to weaken competing militias in territorial strongholds, but also to purify Islam by force, using brutal public executions and amputations to intimidate and deter potential rivals.⁹

The Caliphate's construction is predicated upon the rigid enforcement of ISIL's interpretation of Islamic law in strongholds like the city of Raqqa in Syria and Mosul

⁹ When the Abu Nimr Tribe in Heet challenged ISIL, hundreds of its tribal members, including women and children were tortured and brutally executed. When the Abu Nimr requested assistance from the Abadi Administration in Baghdad, the government sent a drone to photograph the unfolding catastrophe but never sent military reinforcements or aerial support. To Sunni tribal groups like the Abu Nimr and the Shaitat Tribe in Deir Izzour, Syria that have challenged ISIL's ruthless worldview, their failure to receive external assistance simply reinforces their beliefs that the United States, the Assad regime, and the government in Baghdad are advancing the *Safavids'* interests and allowing Sunnis to be murdered, either under the pretext of a U.S.-led air campaign against "terrorism" or by ISIL's puritanical fighters. This plays into ISIL's operations plan. To the extent that local Sunni resistance against ISIL is not supported, local insurgents have less reason to challenge ISIL for their eventual fate is predetermined: the rape of their women, the plundering of their property, and mass public executions.

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in Iraq. Unlike al-Qa'ida's more accommodating stance in the post Arab-Spring world, which resembles Abu Bakr Naji's guidance for "managing savagery" in the early stages of a security vacuum, ISIL has continued the practices of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who attacked the Shia, secularists, non-violent Islamist parties, and Sunni-tribesmen that did not subordinate themselves to al-Qa'ida in Iraq. These practices reflect Naji's later guidance for how to deal with "other gangs and parties" in the later stages of a security vacuum. Naji argues, "We must drag everyone into the battle in order to give life to those who deserve to live and destroy those who deserve to be destroyed."

Strategy

Al-Qa'ida is waging a protracted war of attrition against the West, specifically aiming to bleed the United States. Given the failure of local terrorist groups to overthrow their respective apostate regimes in the 1980s and 1990s, al-Qa'ida senior leadership reasoned that American support was the apostate regimes' "center of gravity." If they were able to attrite the American economic, military, or political will to remain engaged in the Muslim world, local jihadists could overpower the apostates. To wage this war of attrition, al-Qa'ida aims to reorient the violence of militant organizations and individuals in various locations around the world, refocusing their wrath on far-enemy targets like Western embassies, businesses and tourist destinations within their own states. Al-Qa'ida's operations focus on the far-enemy because they need the U.S. to respond militarily in as many locations as possible, overextending itself and spending precious resources, all the while generating greater levels of anti-American sentiment from local Muslim populations in return, until continued U.S. engagement in the Muslim world becomes prohibitive. By inserting itself into various active fronts around the world, al-Qa'ida has spread its anti-Western ideology and brought with it its tactical and targeting preferences.

ISIL is not currently waging a strategy of attrition, but one of escalation. It is using its military superiority to eliminate or subjugate rival insurgent groups and non-violent communities in Iraq and Syria that could eventually pose a threat to the



authority ISIL seeks to impose. Instead of inviting Muslim vs. Western violence and banking on that conflict to polarize communities and mobilize resources, it is benefiting from the resources already being mobilized by the sectarian polarization that is taking place in Iraq, Syria and beyond, which it actively seeks to exacerbate. ISIL is willing and able to use extreme violence to carve out control at the expense of its rivals, and then to consolidate its hold on the resources pouring into the conflict.

Given this comparison, ISIL's relative appeal can be distilled into five points.

1. **Sectarianism:** Whereas al-Qa'ida's "far-enemy" strategy relies on provocation to polarize and mobilize the masses, ISIL is ratcheting up already elevated levels of sectarian tension in the post Arab-Spring world and benefitting from the resulting resource mobilization. The continued presence of the Assad regime in Syria serves as a more salient rallying cry for ISIL than for AQAM, and broad anti-Assad sentiment in Sunni majority countries helps to dampen those governments' responses to ISIL.
2. **Righteousness:** While al-Qa'ida emphasizes the importance of doctrine in its rhetoric, ISIL has evidenced a fervent desire to enforce an uncompromising interpretation of Islamic law through its actions.
3. **Obligation:** Al-Qa'ida relies on an abstract argument – that Islam is under attack everywhere – to convince Muslims that it is their individual duty to defend Islam everywhere, obfuscating offensive tactics with notions of defensive jihad. ISIL has established a physical Caliphate, and with it, the pragmatic obligation to defend the Caliphate and build its institutions.
4. **Strength:** Al-Qa'ida is a cautious and nomadic terrorist organization that has shied away from equating terrain with success, trying instead to reorient extant militant groups from the periphery of their respective conflicts in a slow war of attrition with the West. ISIL, by comparison, appears decisive, confident, and contemporary as they opportunistically seize terrain, antagonize their enemies, and publicize their exploits.
5. **Urgency:** ISIL sees the Caliphate as the means to the final apocalyptic battle between Muslims and the non-Muslim world. For those ideologically



inclined individuals, it is essential to participate in ISIL's campaign now, before the opportunity passes. Without the Caliphate, al-Qa'ida's call to arms lacks the same urgency.

Implications

If sectarian conflict continues to offer greater means for insurgents to mobilize resources and destabilize apostate regimes than al-Qa'ida's far-enemy centered war of attrition, the model presented by ISIL will supplant that of al-Qa'ida. As sectarian tensions remain high, ISIL and aligned jihadist groups will foster and exploit those tensions. ISIL veterans will travel to new fronts outside of Iraq and Syria, bringing their escalation strategy with them and severing regional ties more successfully than al-Qa'ida operations to date. Left unchecked, this contagion effect runs the risk of inciting a sectarian civil war in the Muslim world, and in that calamitous process, advancing al-Qa'ida's strategy of attrition against the West. The West will be relegated to the role of observer, poorly positioned to take any meaningful action to protect itself or others.

If ISIL's Caliphate project fails, however, their presence on the fringe of the radical spectrum may serve to make al-Qa'ida and its associated movement look more legitimate by comparison. This fringe effect could benefit al-Qa'ida in two ways.

First, as the international security community hones in on ISIL it could result in increased freedom of maneuver for al-Qa'ida in the short-term, the very time when the crisis of legitimacy brought on by ISIL has created a tremendous incentive for al-Qa'ida to conduct a successful attack against the West. The U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan and ongoing instability in the Pakistani tribal belts may provide the requisite safe-haven for al-Qa'ida to hatch such an attack. Perhaps ironically, the presence of large numbers of foreign fighters in Iraq and Syria drawn in by ISIL and other organizations may also provide al-Qa'ida with an opportunity to turn one or more of these individuals around to attack the West, as is the alleged mission of the Khorasan group within Jabhat al-Nusra. Second, an al-Qa'ida organization perceived

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to be more legitimate, discerning and focused on the “true enemies of Islam” may secure greater funding and popular support in the long-term.

In either case, it is essential that any U.S. strategy prioritizes working with Sunni nations and communities to marginalize violent Sunni extremists. To do this, the U.S. must find a way to ease sectarian tensions and earn the trust of our Sunni partners, allowing them to focus their attention on marginalizing groups like ISIL and AQAM.

Bill Braniff the Executive Director of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). He previously served as the Director of Practitioner Education and an Instructor at West Point's Combating Terrorism Center (CTC). There he led the practitioner education program, the nation's largest provider of counterterrorism education to federal, state and local governmental audiences.

Braniff is a graduate of the United States Military Academy where he received his bachelor's degree. Following his Company Command as an Armor Officer in the U.S. Army, Braniff attended the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) where he received a master's degree in international relations. Upon graduation, Bill worked in the nuclear counterterrorism field at the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration, and as a research associate with the CTC Harmony Project at West Point.

Braniff lectures frequently for counterterrorism audiences including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Joint Special Operations University, National Defense University, the United States Attorneys' Office and Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Braniff has also taken a keen interest in the field of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). He has consulted with the Department of Justice, the FBI and the National Security Staff, playing a key role in an interagency working group dedicated to the topic. In June of 2013, Bill testified before Congress regarding American attitudes towards terrorism and counterterrorism, and in February of 2014 he testified before the House Armed Services Committee on the state of al-Qa'ida and its associated movement.

Braniff is also heavily involved in public education. His speaking engagements include several *Council on Foreign Relations* and *World Affairs Council* events in cities around the country. In May of 2010, Bill took part in the National September 11th Museum and Memorial Speaker Series and is featured in the Museum's educational webcast series. He has been interviewed on numerous occasions by National Public Radio, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal and by a host of additional international, national and local print and radio media outlets.

**DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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Witness name: William Braniff

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

Individual

Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented: The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), University of Maryland, College Park.

Federal Contract or Grant Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) or grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

2015

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
Cooperative Agreement	Dept. of Homeland Security	\$461,000	Countering Violent Extremism Research Portfolio
Grant	National Institute of Justice	\$570,545	Empirical Assessment of Domestic Disengagement and Deradicalization (EAD3)
Grant	National Institute of Justice	\$589,736	A Comparative Study of Violent Extremism and Gangs

2014

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
Grant	Dept. of Homeland Security	\$102,396	Enhancements to the TEVUS Portal Interface
Cooperative Agreement	Dept. of Defense	\$1,046,510	Drivers of Conflict and Convergence in China-US Relations in a Global Context
Cooperative Agreement	Dept. of Homeland Security	\$15,000	Global Terrorism Database Training Modules as a Continuing Education Unit
Cooperative Agreement	Dept. of Homeland Security	\$150,000	Critical Infrastructure Partnership Culture Study
Cooperative Agreement	National Counterterrorism Center	\$99,828	Net Assessment for Terrorism
Cooperative Agreement	Dept. of Homeland Security	\$49,881	The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant: Branding, Leadership Culture and Lethal Attraction
Contract	Dept. of Homeland Security	\$153,489	Comprehensive Testing of Imminent Threat Public Messages for Mobile Devices – Phase 4
Grant	Dept. of Defense	\$512,401	Mobile Radiation Detectors: Threat Perception and Device Acceptance
Grant	Dept. of Defense – Office of Naval Research	\$358,297	Cross-National Analysis of Islamic Fundamentalism
Grant	Institute for Intergovernmental Research	\$86,169	Validating Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Indicators
Contract	Dept. of Homeland Security – Domestic Nuclear Detection Office	\$302,780	Updates to the International Regional Reports for North Korea, Japan and Russia
Contract	Federal Bureau of Investigation	\$239,798	Anatomizing the CBRN Insider Threat
Grant	National Science Foundation	\$1,452,773	Systems with Emergent Behavior and Dynamic Interdependencies
Contract	University of Southern California	\$78,809	Visiting Faculty Scholars for Transition and Commercialization Issues

Grant	National Science Foundation	\$2,922,883	INSPIRE Track 2 – Computational Modeling of Grievance and Political Instability Through Global Media
Contract	Dept. of Homeland Security - Domestic Nuclear Detection Office	\$776,692	Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) Process
Grant	Dept. of Homeland Security	\$351,839	ARI-MA – Dissuading Adversaries and their RN Pathways: Integrating Deterrence Theory and Analytics in the GNDA
Grant	U. S. Federal Emergency Management Agency	\$799,966	Proactive CVE in the Domestic Context: Awareness and Preparedness
Contract	STMD - Maryland Emergency Management Agency	\$36,954	Risk and Crisis Communication Training (TRACC)
Contract	Dept. of Homeland Security - Federal Law Enforcement Training Center	\$46,976	National Summit on Empowering Communities to Prevent Violent Extremism: Summit Deliverables
Contract	Sandia National Laboratories	\$65,554	Enrichment and Reprocessing (E&R) Futures Study: Subject Matter Expert

2013

Federal grant/contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
Cooperative Agreement	Dept. of Homeland Security	\$411,999	Extremist Pathways to Power-Extremist Ideologies
Cooperative Agreement	Dept. of Homeland Security	\$124,665	Countering the Inhumane: Modeling Probable Pathways for Human Trafficking along the U. S. – Mexico Border
Contract	Dept. of Homeland Security	\$692,999	Comprehensive Testing of Imminent Threat Public Messages for Mobile Devices
Contract	Dept. of Homeland Security	\$119,930	PRND Capability Development Framework Mapping
Grant	National Institute of Justice	\$625,027	Empirical Assessment of Domestic Radicalization

Grant	National Science Foundation	\$117,176	CIF21 DIBBs: Building a Unified Infrastructure for Data Integration on Political Violence and Conflict
Grant	U. S. Dept. of State	\$838,741	Global Terrorism Database (GTD) Data Collection for Annual Country Reports on Terrorism Annex
Contract	Dept. of Homeland Security	\$74,447	Comprehensive Testing of Imminent Threat Public Messages for Mobile Devices – Phase 2
Grant	National Science Foundation	\$376,981	Dissuading Adversaries and their RN Pathways: Integrating Deterrence Theory and Analytics in the GNDA
Contract	Dept. of Homeland Security - Domestic Nuclear Detection Office	\$202,812	TSA VIPR Team Needs Assessment
Contract	Dept. of Homeland Security - Domestic Nuclear Detection Office	\$69,647	Strategic Assessment of Border Engagement and Response (SABER) for Illicit R/N Trafficking
Contract	Dept. of Homeland Security - Domestic Nuclear Detection Office	\$2,367,494	Integration of International Architecture Analyses
Contract	Dept. of Homeland Security - Domestic Nuclear Detection Office	\$416,124	Consensus Framework for Informing Decision-Making in the Biological Threat Characterization Program

Foreign Government Contract or Payment Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts or payments originating from a foreign government, please provide the following information:

2015

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment
N/A			

2014

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment
N/A			

2013

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment
N/A			

ISIL and the New Islamist Challenge**Testimony before the House Armed Services Committee****Prepared Statement of Marc Lynch**

Professor of Political Science and Director, Institute for Middle East Studies, The Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, and Adjunct Senior Fellow, Center for a New American Security

February 13, 2015

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (hereafter ISIL) shocked the United States and the world over the last year with its rapid capture of territory through large swathes of Iraq and Syria and declaration of a new Caliphate. Its penchant for broadcasting barbaric spectacles such as decapitations of hostages and the immolation of downed Jordanian pilot Mouaz al-Kasasbeh galvanized the attention of a horrified world. In contrast to earlier experiences with al-Qaeda and its affiliates, the Islamic State has built a seemingly robust proto-state in the territories it controls, with affiliates emerging, with varying degrees of success, in areas such as the Sinai and Libya. The massacre of the journalists of Charlie Hebdo in Paris and brutal attack on a Jewish supermarket in France, like the atrocities committed by Boko Haram and the ongoing horrors of Syria, cast a dark pall over the world.

The United States has responded by forming an impressive international coalition working to cut off its flow of funds and fighters, mount a strategic communications campaign to counter its ideology and undermine its image, and to degrade its capabilities on the ground through air-strikes and support for local partners. The U.S. has thus far crafted an effective strategy in response to ISIL which has halted its momentum while avoiding the worst potential pitfalls.¹ As it moves into the next stages of this campaign, it should maintain a narrow focus on ISIL in its military efforts, concentrating on securing Iraq while avoiding an expansion of the mission in Syria which could drag it into quagmire. It should expand strategic communications campaigns designed to highlight ISIL's extremism and its weaknesses, while resisting the pressure to expand the campaign against ISIL to include other Islamist movements. It should push its allies in the region to curb abuses of human rights and offer a viable, attractive alternative to extremism and violence. Above all, it

¹ For reference, my own recommendations for combating ISIS were laid out last October in a report for the Center for a New American Security, *The Tourniquet*, available at <http://www.cnas.org/saving-syria-and-iraq>.

must constantly reinforce the message that the United States is not and will never be at war with Islam.

ISIL's shocking propaganda and successes in Syria and Iraq make it easy to exaggerate its novelty and to overly focus analysis on its ideology. It has become common to present ISIL as something unique in world history, an exceptionally ideological actor with unprecedented state-building capabilities and an uncanny ability to inspire new followers and recruits from around the world. The ISIS threat is very real, of course, especially to the states and peoples in the region. But ISIL is hardly the first insurgency to seize territory and seek to govern it through the exploitation of local resources and the attraction of external support. Many non-state violent actors have deployed extreme, public violence for strategic purposes, whether to intimidate local populations and foreign enemies or to maintain the morale of its members. Perhaps the most novel element of ISIL is its ability to attract foreign fighters to its cause, but even this has precedent in past insurgencies, and could prove to be as great a weakness as an advantage as travel to its territories becomes more difficult and local populations grow resentful of foreigners. ISIL's efforts to establish branches in other parts of the region and to sketch a grandiose new Islamic Caliphate mirror the last decade's efforts by al-Qaeda.

A great deal has been written about how the sectarian misgovernance of Iraq by former Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki squandered the opportunity for political accommodation created by the Iraqi Sunni Awakening. More could be written about how ISIL evolved within the cauldron of a fragmented, externally-supported Syrian insurgency. Supporters of the Syrian opposition often argue that the Assad regime created ISIL, or at least encouraged its emergence, in order to destroy the moderate opposition and make himself the only alternative to the jihadist trend. This is only part of the story, however. Protracted, multipolar, externally-supported insurgencies often empower the most radical and ruthless groups, as non-violent and moderate actors are killed, disenchanting, or marginalized. Broad, mass movements in support of the Syrian insurgency, especially in the Gulf, favored Islamist and jihadist factions and were accompanied by a disturbing degree of extreme sectarianism. It is highly unlikely that U.S. military support for moderate rebels, an option which rose to the forefront of policy debates in the summer of 2012, would have significantly altered this trajectory.

ISIL's appeal beyond Syria and Iraq should be understood within the political context of the advantage of the chaos and poor decisions which followed the Arab uprisings. The 2011 mass protests from Tunisia and Egypt to Bahrain and Yemen were driven not by Islamist extremism but by profound political and economic grievances. Al-Qaeda initially struggled to respond to this demonstration of the possibility of meaningful, peaceful political change. The reversals of those transitions, and the nationwide repression of both mainstream Islamists and secular activists, has been a strategic gift to al-Qaeda, ISIL and other extremist trends. The failure of almost all of those attempted transitions, with the sole and partial exception of Tunisia, has badly undermined the idea of the possibility of peaceful

political change. The termination of Egypt's troubled democratic transition through a military coup has likely doomed that crucial U.S. ally to turmoil and repression for the foreseeable future. The horrors of collapsed states and civil war in Libya, Yemen and Syria hang over all political life. None of the underlying drivers of those protests have been resolved, and many – from personal insecurity to economic misery – have deteriorated. Focusing only on “radical Islam” to the exclusion of these vital issues of governance, democracy and economic opportunity would guarantee failure. Encouraging or tolerating repression in the name of counter-terrorism will only fuel the grim cycle of repression, protest, and radicalization.

It is vital that the U.S. and its allies not unlearn the hard-won analytical progress of the last decade in our understanding of the variety of Islamist politics, ideas, and trends. Lumping all Islamists together produces poor policy, missing key opportunities to isolate and marginalize extremists such as al-Qaeda and ISIS. The Iraqi Awakening, for instance, rested upon recognizing and exploiting the distinctions between al-Qaeda and nationalist Islamist insurgency factions. A determined effort in recent years to blur those distinctions, as in recent moves to name the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization, is an analytical step backward. The Muslim Brotherhood, for all the many issues to be raised with its ideology and discourse, typically served as a competitor with and a firewall against recruitment into violent jihadist groups. Its tight organizational structure maintained discipline and ideological focus among its members. The Brotherhood, like most successful organizations, jealously guarded its place within Islamist politics against potential competitors such as al-Qaeda. Today, following Egypt's military coup, that organization lies in tatters, with much of its leadership in prison and its strategy of democratic political participation discredited. This does not weaken jihadist movements such as ISIL, but rather strengthens them by removing a traditional mainstream alternative to jihadism.

In the years following the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the U.S. came to understand the paramount importance of distinguishing between ordinary Muslims and al-Qaeda. Copious survey evidence demonstrates the massive support among Muslim publics for democracy and their rejection of terrorism and violence. Al-Qaeda represented a tiny fringe within the Islamic world, and only one small trend within even Islamist movements. Its strategy of terrorism was designed in large part to create a clash of civilizations and jihadist Islam which did not exist. Its problem has always been that most Muslims don't agree with its ideas, strategy or vision. Its acts of savagery sought in part to overcome the reality of their own marginality by inviting retaliation and polarization which remove the option of co-existence and moderation. Terrorism has aimed to drive a self-fulfilling prophecy of existential conflict from which Muslims, as much as non-Muslims, can not escape. ISIL is operating in a more polarized, shattered Middle East where it can attempt to appeal to a broader (though still extremely small) pool of potential recruits. U.S. policy towards ISIL must focus on rejecting rather than accepting its claims to represent Islam, marginalizing it rather than inflating its claims to authenticity.

ISIL poses a very real threat to U.S. interests and to the people and states of the Middle East, but the response must address the real nature of that threat and not fall into the many strategic traps which lie in the path. The U.S. should continue to support military efforts and political reforms in Iraq, while resisting pressure to be dragged in to the Syrian civil war. It should capitalize on the damage to ISIL's momentum through its high-profile defeat in Kobane and by the popular outrage over its burning of the Jordanian pilot through strategic communications which deflate rather than inflate its image. It should support allies under extreme pressure such as Jordan, while also working to ensure that allies such as the Gulf states and Turkey align their strategies and policies more consistently with U.S. objectives. More broadly, it should recognize the political roots of ISIL's spread, and refocus its efforts to promote political reforms and curb the human rights abuses which fuel popular anger and alienation. And, above all, it should ensure that its strategies consistently work to marginalize ISIL, deny it the strategic gift of allowing it to speak for Islam, and block its efforts to promote a broad clash of civilizations between Islam and the West.

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Professor Lynch received his B.A. in Political Science from Duke University and his M.A. and Ph.D. in Government from Cornell University. He teaches courses on Middle Eastern politics and international relations. He is the director of the Institute for Middle East Studies at GW, edits the Middle East Channel for ForeignPolicy.com, and is a non-resident senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security.

Education

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Publications

- *The Arab Uprising* (PublicAffairs, March 2012)
- *Revolution in the Arab World: Tunisia, Egypt, And the Unmaking of an Era* (*Foreign Policy*, 2011). eBook.
- "After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of the Online Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State". *Perspectives on Politics* 9, no.2 (2011), pp.301-310.
- "Veiled Truths: The Rise of Political Islam in the West", *Foreign Affairs* 89, no.4 (July/August 2010), pp.138-147.
- *Voices of the New Arab Public: Iraq, al-Jazeera, and Middle East Politics Today* (Columbia Univ. Pr., 2007).
- "Brothers in Arms: Memo to the Muslim Brotherhood on How to Talk to America". *Foreign Policy*, September/October 2007.

Classes Taught

- IAFF 6361 Middle East Studies Cornerstone
- IAFF 6378 Special Topics in Middle East Studies
Media and Politics in the Islamic World
- PSC 2440 Theories of International Politics
- PSC 2478 International Relations of the Middle East
- PSC 6478 International Relations of the Middle East
- PsC 8441 Advanced Theories of International Relations

**DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES: Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5), of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 114th Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants), or contracts or payments originating with a foreign government, received during the current and two previous calendar years either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness and related to the subject matter of the hearing. This form is intended to assist witnesses appearing before the House Committee on Armed Services in complying with the House rule. Please note that a copy of these statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the witness's personal privacy (including home address and phone number) will be made publicly available in electronic form not later than one day after the witness's appearance before the committee. Witnesses may list additional grants, contracts, or payments on additional sheets, if necessary.

Witness name: Marc Lynch

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

- Individual
 Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented: _____

Federal Contract or Grant Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) or grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

2015

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
n/a			

2014

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
n/a			

2013

Federal grant/ contract	Federal agency	Dollar value	Subject of contract or grant
n/a			

Foreign Government Contract or Payment Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts or payments originating from a foreign government, please provide the following information:

2015

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment
n/a			

2014

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment
n/a			

2013

Foreign contract/ payment	Foreign government	Dollar value	Subject of contract or payment
n/a			

**WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING
THE HEARING**

FEBRUARY 13, 2015

RESPONSE TO QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MR. SCOTT

Dr. LYNCH. I did not intend by this that we should not pay attention to terrorism or to the strategic issues in the Middle East. My point was that we should not over-react to the daily news from fluid combat zones such as Syria or Iraq. Over the course of such a protracted civil war, factions will advance and retreat and the violence will ebb and flow without it making a strategically significant difference. My call here was for us to focus on the big picture with regard to the strategic context in theaters such as Syria and to not craft policies based on short-term developments on the ground which do not fundamentally alter that strategic context. [See page 35.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

FEBRUARY 13, 2015

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. PALAZZO

Mr. PALAZZO. The Islamic Republic of Iran has continued to be a thorn in the side of the United States because of their failure to halt the expansion of their nuclear program as well as the support of terrorist groups like Hamas, we know about the threats that they pose to our strongest ally in the region, Israel, but I am concerned that their influence is expanding and a destabilization of the region as a whole leaves a void that Iran would love to fill. Does Islamic extremism in the region open the door for an unfriendly government to fill that void? Do you see any expansion or desire for expansion on the horizon for Iran across the Middle East given the fragility of the region? How do negotiations with Iran affect an already fragile balance in the region? What would you like to see with regard to the strategy to keep Iran at bay? How does a nuclear Iran affect America and allies in the region?

What would you like to see with regard to the strategy to keep Iran at bay?

General FLYNN. Longer the Syrian conflict persists, and the more the United States and the West writ large are seen as complicit in the survival of the Assad regime, the less productive relations between a future Syrian state and the United States are likely to be. However, this resentment, or lack of engagement, will not necessarily take the form of "hostility." Regional forces including U.S. Gulf allies, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, are unlikely to allow extremist groups to permeate governing coalitions, and groups that want to establish an "Islamic State" or state governed exclusively by Islamic Law (such as Jabhat Al Nusra or Ahrar Al Sham) are unlikely to be empowered by either regional or international political processes that would provide for a transition of power. Without such a political process, no rebel coalition (whether hostile or friendly to the United States) is likely to take political control through military force. U.S. engagement and support of the Etilaf/Interim Government could produce positive relations should either of those groups be involved in the governance of future Syria, but these institutions are increasingly ineffectual and cut-off from regular Syrians. It is also important to note that U.S. lethal and non-lethal aid to the moderate opposition is perceived by moderate forces on the ground as lack-luster, and designed to prolong the conflict not stop the crimes of the Assad regime. This means that even ideologically moderate forces, supportive of a secular state, may not view the United States as a reliable and/or consistent partner. However, these groups could also be easily won over through more forceful U.S. support. The remnants of the regime, on the other hand, and their backers in Moscow and Tehran, are likely to persist in their hostility towards the United States regardless of the outcome of the conflict or U.S. positioning.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. ASHFORD

Mr. ASHFORD. Some have raised concerns that U.S. citizens are traveling to fight alongside terrorist organizations, specifically ISIL, and then returning to the United States. How should we deal with such a threat?

General FLYNN. The United States will need effective cooperation with regional states, particularly Turkey, so that these partners can track the activities of Americans either within their states, or traveling across the border to Syria. Along with Turkey, the relevant partners will be Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. All of these states, sometimes from opposite directions, may take exception to the current U.S. role in the conflict, and anti-terror cooperation may not be ideal (as is the situation currently—simply due to loss of trust). That said, currently, cooperation with Jordan and Iraq seems somewhat effective, given the anti-Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) focus shared by the three states. Turkey is both the nation most unhappy with current U.S. policy (and they are very unhappy), and most aware of Americans traveling inside and outside of Syria from their southern border. Some political concessions may need to be made in order to garner more cooperation and intelligence sharing from the Turks, but this could take a variety of forms, including moderate adjustments in U.S. rhetoric and/or policy towards the Syrian regime. Turkey seems to have made noise that it is at least resigned to the U.S.-Iran deal (a deal that I personally believe places our national security at great risk), yet this development should not be a barrier to security cooperation.

Mr. ASHFORD. Given the open travel policies between the U.S. and European nations, what is the threat posed by European nationals subscribing to Islamic extremism entering the United States?

General FLYNN. The geographic positioning of Europe makes the direct threat from European nationals inside the United States relatively low. Not only do these actors have access to European targets, they are also much closer to the Middle East, and more likely to travel there to be at the heart of conflicts, rather than travel to the United States. Since 9/11, the vast majority of European extremists carrying out attacks have done so either in their European host country, or back in the Middle East. This is in part because the political grievances of young Muslims in Europe often have to do with perceived slights against their religion/community in Europe, as well as deficiencies in the immigration process and the machinations of the welfare state. These grievances have little application to the United States. There is also certainly a sense that Western actors, led by the United States, are at war with Islam, and that this state of affairs requires retributive action. However, while many European extremists have traveled to Iraq or Syria to face Americans and/or their supposed proxies, few have made their way to the United States. All said, using “European jihadists” may present Al Qaeda and Associated Movements (AQAM) organizations with an opportunity and a means by which to conduct attacks against America—so our guard against known Syrian or Iraqi travelers should remain high.

Mr. ASHFORD. Some have raised concerns that U.S. citizens are traveling to fight alongside terrorist organizations, specifically ISIL, and then returning to the United States. How should we deal with such a threat?

Mr. BRANIFF. START is currently engaged in a data collection effort funded by the Science and Technology Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security to determine if there are salient warning signs, patterns of behavior, or characteristics associated with an individual being recruited to become or choosing to become a foreign fighter, and/or choosing to return to the United States following travel abroad in order to conduct an attack. START believes that it is essential for the government to invest in datasets that are enhanced over time, providing a continually improving empirical basis upon which to inform counterterrorism policy and practice.

START is also soliciting funding to utilize our Geospatial Information Sciences (GIS) research team to identify likely routes for ingress to and egress from territory controlled by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) using probabilistic analysis. This kind of analysis can help identify locations where governments can place their limited resources to intervene recruits on their way to the battlefield, or veterans on their way from the battlefield to other locations. As more data about foreign fighter flows is incorporated into the model, the model would become more valuable to counterterrorism practitioners. A GIS platform could serve as a vehicle to overcome one of the largest problems regarding the foreign fighter issue, that of information sharing, and help to create a common operating picture for the interagency or the international community.

Aside from supporting empirical approaches to this important problem, the government should prioritize its intelligence and applicable military and federal law enforcement assets on egress from Iraq and Syria, as veteran foreign fighters exposed to ISIS’s ideology, tactical preferences, and targeting preferences pose a significant threat, not just to the homeland, but to other volatile regions where ISIS may seek to destabilize regimes and engage in internecine violence. Domestically, the government should focus on empowering communities to work to minimize the attractiveness of ISIS’s recruitment efforts by engaging in awareness raising, prevention, and intervention programming.

Mr. ASHFORD. Given the open travel policies between the U.S. and European nations, what is the threat posed by European nationals subscribing to Islamic extremism entering the United States?

Mr. BRANIFF. There are several reasons why a European national subscribing to an extremist ideology may seek to enter the United States to conduct an attack:

- They may be instructed to travel to the United States by a person of authority in a terrorist organization who feels that this European citizen has the best chance of successfully traveling to and operating within the United States.
- They may decide for themselves that the United States is playing a leading role in counterterrorism efforts and is therefore a more important target than their European country of origin;
- If they feel that they are “on the radar” in their country of origin, they may believe that they have greater freedom of maneuver in a different country where the authorities may not have access to information about them.

- This would likely be a miscalculation if they are on their government's radar, as crossing international borders provides an important opportunity for interdiction.
- It may not be a miscalculation if they have raised the suspicion of their respective community, but not yet attracted attention from their government. While it is certainly possible that a European national could enter the United States to conduct an attack, it is more likely that individuals radicalized to violence would have greater opportunity to conduct an attack in their home country, and that traveling abroad for the purpose of the attack would expose them to greater risk. While not perfect, tools like the no-fly-list do serve as a deterrent.

Mr. ASHFORD. Given the open travel policies between the U.S. and European nations, what is the threat posed by European nationals subscribing to Islamic extremism entering the United States?

Dr. LYNCH. European nationals affiliated or sympathizing with Islamist extremist groups, whether the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or Al Qaeda or other organizations, do pose an obvious, albeit limited, potential threat to the United States. The number of European nationals traveling to Syria to fight with jihadist groups is genuinely alarming. This threat can be mitigated through cooperated policing and intelligence sharing with European partners, however.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. SHUSTER

Mr. SHUSTER. Has ISIL already displaced Al Qaeda as the leader in the global jihad movement? Which of these two entities poses a greater risk to the U.S. homeland and our assets overseas?

General FLYNN. Despite the rapid rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Al Qaeda remains an important player both in Syria and Iraq, and the global Jihad movement. In many ways, the rapid rise of ISIL is linked to its inherent vulnerabilities. For example, ISIL has forgone some of the international financing operations that allow Al Qaeda to survive, choosing to pursue a more independent war economy that makes the group less beholden to international backers. However, this war economy relies on further seizures of territory as well as continuing to hold on to current oil assets. While Assad and the international coalition take oil assets back from ISIL in Syria, Iraqi forces are tamping down on ISIL's tax base by taking back territory in Iraq. ISIL may still be expanding in sections of both Syria and Iraq, but these areas are less reliable sources of income. While the international coalition's campaign can certainly not be said to be "working" the ISIL economic model relies on perpetual rapid expansion in a manner that is simply unsustainable. <http://www.businessinsider.com/tafrikinomics-how-isis-funds-its-caliphate-2015-3> Further, by declaring a caliphate with provincial capitals, ISIL has made its territory manifest, and thus painted a target on its own back. Even while international coalition strikes are having a marginal effect (and they are marginal), it seems unlikely that regional and international powers will tolerate the group's presence indefinitely. Al Qaeda, which still exists somewhat underground, may also have a more sustainable model in this sense. One thing to keep in mind regarding ISIL is the existence of a strategic vulnerability. Among other strategic considerations and components, to defeat ISIL, we must consider isolating and limiting them to their current geographic dimensions they currently control and destroy them in detail. The longer this struggle goes on, the more geography they will dominate and the stronger the group will grow. In addition, even many literalist Salafists find ISIL actions to be beyond the pale, and out of step with even historic jihadist interpretations of scripture. For example, Al Qaeda has taken aggressive steps in recent years to curb their own attacks that were perceived as killing innocent Muslims because of the way it was affecting the group's popularity. ISIL has made no such concessions, and in fact, these differences of opinions contributed to the ISIL-Jabhat al-Nusra split in Syria. Further, many Muslims object to ISIL's self-aggrandizement and placement of their own project in the historical canon of Islam as arrogant, and out of step with the more modest self-conceptualization of groups like Al Qaeda. Despite the built in vulnerabilities tied to the ambition of the ISIL project, there is nothing to say that the group couldn't go underground following defeats in the field and adopt a more Al Qaeda-like modus operandi. If this happened, ISIL could possibly steal some of Al Qaeda's more traditional support due to their historic accomplishments. Crucially, both groups will be able to continue to thrive, occupy territory, and plan attacks against Western targets undetected as long as the Middle East is home to multiple conflicts and large swaths of ungovernable territory. The conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Libya, civil strife in Egypt (who we should be

supporting far more than we are), ungoverned spaces now in parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as parts of Mali, all provide both safe-havens and recruiting pools for both groups, and this is unlikely to change in the short-term. As such, the primary U.S. focus should be ending these regional conflicts, and fostering inclusive, pluralistic governance that makes it harder for terrorists to find sympathy for their extreme ideologies. These political processes would also likely have to include some avenue for reigning in Iranian activity in the region, which serves as a primary antagonist of Sunni-Arab communities, and in so doing creates sympathy for extremist groups. The latter issue represents (potentially) the single biggest threat to Middle East stability. The more the Islamic Republic of Iran is allowed (and enabled to a degree) to expand their influence in the broader Middle East, the longer this regional conflict is likely to last, eventually turning into a far more strategic and existential problem for the United States and many of our closest allies and partners.

Mr. SHUSTER. Are you concerned that an Authorization for Use of Military Force with a clear expiration date and limitations on ground forces such as the one proposed by the president will embolden extremists who know that American military response is handicapped?

General FLYNN. [No answer was available at the time of printing.]

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Braniff, you state in your testimony that “as the international security community hones in on ISIL it could result in increased freedom of maneuver for Al Qaeda in the short term, the very time when the crisis of legitimacy brought on by ISIL has created a tremendous incentive for Al Qaeda to conduct a successful attack against the West.” What sort of strategy do you envision would allow the United States to prevent such a scenario from occurring?

Mr. BRANIFF. This aspect of my testimony was meant to underscore the importance of maintaining pressure on Al Qaeda and its Associated Movements (AQAM), as opposed to advocating for a sea change in U.S. strategy as it pertains to preventing attacks on the homeland. The intelligence and special operations communities need to remain vigilant to threats posed by AQAM as they have been.

However, playing defense, no matter how vigilant that defense may be, is necessary but not sufficient to manage the threat of violent extremism more broadly. Similarly, the disruption afforded by drone strikes and other kinetic attacks on extremist networks abroad may be operationally effective in the short term, but does not amount to a strategy. In parallel with these efforts, the United States must enlist the support and enhance the capabilities of Sunni governments and communities abroad, while avoiding stoking the fires of sectarian tension that ultimately work in the favor of violent sectarian extremists, whether they are Sunni or Shia. Only Sunni actors can successfully marginalize violent Sunni extremists. A successful strategy hinges on our ability to build regional partnerships to address regional threats (beyond the U.S. government’s traditional bi-lateral approach to capacity building), to train and equip our partners in a timely and sustainable fashion, and to signal that our support of those efforts can be counted on consistently and over time—“across the aisle” and across our executive and legislative branches.

In addition, I fully support the domestic focus on empowering communities to prevent violent extremism from taking root. START’s research and experience working with law enforcement organizations, educators and non-governmental organizations suggest that these practices, typically referred to as “Countering Violent Extremism” programming, or CVE, are pragmatic and appropriate for the domestic setting for at least three reasons:

- Law enforcement organizations do not have the capability to manage the signal to noise ratio associated with pinpointing who may be engaged in ideologically motivated criminal behaviors within the much larger set of individuals who may be flirting with extremist (albeit constitutionally protected) ideas. Community members, on the other hand, have more intimate knowledge of one another and are better placed to identify and intervene with at-risk individuals before they engage in ideologically motivated crime.
- In addition to being more effective, it is more appropriate for community members or groups to operate in the pre-criminal space than it is for the law enforcement or intelligence community to operate in the pre-criminal space given the protections and values enshrined in the U.S. Constitution.
- Finally, many of the practices that can help make individuals and communities resistant to the appeals of violent extremist ideologies can also enhance resilience and civil society in the face of other serious challenges, such as drug abuse, gang violence or poorly integrated communities. Domestic policies designed to empower civil society and community resilience are in our collective best interests.

Mr. SHUSTER. Has ISIL already displaced Al Qaeda as the leader in the global jihad movement? Which of these two entities poses a greater risk to the U.S. homeland and our assets overseas?

Mr. BRANIFF. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has eclipsed Al Qaeda as the most important terrorist organization within the global jihadist movement, but that does not mean that Al Qaeda and its Associated Movement (AQAM) will subordinate themselves to ISIL, will relent in their efforts to attack U.S. national interests, or that AQAM cannot emerge from this competition as the pre-eminent current in the jihadist landscape.

As stated in my testimony, AQAM's attrition strategy, while not cogent or directed, will benefit from the escalated levels of violence in hot spots across the Muslim world where ISIL and AQAM proliferate and compete; U.S. national interests will be more difficult to pursue in these places and Americans may grow weary of the effort to remain engaged in what appear to be violent and intractable problems.

AQAM may also appear to be a more legitimate standard bearer than ISIL given ISIL's propensity for Muslim-on-Muslim violence, should they fail to live up to their promises of building a triumphant and sustainable caliphate, or due to recent assertions/revelations put forth by Der Spiegel reporter Christoph Reuter in his recent article, "The Terror Strategist: Secret Files Reveal the Structure of Islamic State" regarding ISIL's disingenuous and manipulative use of religion as a ruse to advance the agenda of former Baathists seeking to regain power.

Having just made the case that the threat of AQAM should not be discounted, I would argue that ISIL poses a greater risk to the U.S. homeland and our assets overseas, not to mention our allies overseas. They have a greater network of foreign fighters to mobilize. They are well financed, organized and trained. In addition, my assumption is that the U.S. Government has less information and fewer, less mature intelligence collection capabilities pertaining to ISIL in Syria due to the civil war than it has regarding many of the Al Qaeda affiliates that have been actively targeted by the U.S. Government for years.

Mr. SHUSTER. Are you concerned that an Authorization for Use of Military Force with a clear expiration date and limitations on ground forces such as the one proposed by the president will embolden extremists who know that American military response is handicapped?

Mr. BRANIFF. From a practical standpoint, I am concerned that a limited Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) will take military options off of the table in a very fluid environment in which I anticipate the already high levels of terrorist violence and sectarian tension will increase. Additionally, I believe it is important to signal to our Sunni allies in the region that we are committed to helping them marginalize violent Sunni extremists consistently and over time, "across the aisle" and across the executive and legislative branches. They are many political considerations to balance, but I argue that only Sunni governments and communities can ultimately marginalize violent Sunni extremists. If this is true, U.S. strategy and policy should signal our unequivocal commitment to our Sunni allies.

Mr. SHUSTER. You state, "The U.S. should continue to support military efforts and political reforms in Iraq" and that we "should support allies under extreme pressure such as Jordan." Given that the current administration has also shifted the United States' strategic approach within the Middle East from large-scale deployment of armed forces to "train, advise, and assist" and "building partnership capacity," how can we further utilize our industrial base capacity to provide our allies and partners with the munitions they need to defeat threats like ISIL?

Dr. LYNCH. The United States has provided significant amounts of arms and assistance to its partners in the region. The primary problem is less the ability or willingness to provide weapons to legitimate partners, than the absence of limitations on the availability of legitimate partners. The United States should avoid arming governments or organizations which systemically violate human rights or who are demonstrably likely to use weapons in ways contrary to U.S. interests. The threat of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant should not lead the United States to ignore hard-earned lessons about the potential negative consequences of providing arms and munitions to governments and organizations that do not meet such standards of legitimacy.

Mr. SHUSTER. Has ISIL already displaced Al Qaeda as the leader in the global jihad movement? Which of these two entities poses a greater risk to the U.S. homeland and our assets overseas?

Dr. LYNCH. Both the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al Qaeda continue to be active and powerful organizations within specific domains. They share the same basic ideological orientations, despite their competition. Both Al Qaeda and ISIL have shifted in recent years towards a strategy of seizing and controlling territory, rather than the older Al Qaeda model of deterritorialized, transna-

tional terrorist attacks. Both seek to appeal to the very small number of Muslims attracted to the ideas of global jihad, and both could inspire such radical individuals and groups to carry out acts of violence. Since the death of Osama bin Laden, Al Qaeda Central has declined in influence and centrality to the global jihadist movement. Several of its affiliates, particularly Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (Yemen) and Jabhat al-Nusra (Syria) remain strong and growing organizations on the ground. ISIL has attempted to parlay its dramatic advances in Iraq and Syria into leadership of similar organizations in other arenas, but with limited success. As it struggles to sustain its control over its Syrian and Iraqi territories under sustained coalition pressure, ISIL will likely lose momentum and appeal more broadly. The balance between the two organizations is therefore somewhat fluid, and related to events in distinct arenas. There is a real risk that their competition will lead one or both to attempt spectacular terrorist attacks against the United States or its allies in order to advance its reputation within these jihadist circles.

Mr. SHUSTER. Are you concerned that an Authorization for Use of Military Force with a clear expiration date and limitations on ground forces such as the one proposed by the president will embolden extremists who know that American military response is handicapped?

Dr. LYNCH. No. The greater danger to the United States, when faced with such complex, open-ended wars, without evident endgame is that it be dragged in to a ruinous quagmire. The risk of mission-creep is real, and it is essential that it be avoided. A limited scope Authorization for the Use of Military Force would require the Administration to clearly articulate its strategy, including an envisioned endgame and the required resources. This would make for a more effective U.S. strategy, regardless of how it is perceived by adversaries.

